

THE
GREAT
ANSWER



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The
Great Answer

THE GREAT ANSWER



BY MARGARET LEE RUNBECK

Author of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room"

Beatrice Atlass, Research Assistant



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to all the MacPhersons
wherever they are, whatever their names
this book is dedicated



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ALTHOUGH RETOLD in my own words, all the material in this book has been gathered from reliable news sources, personal interviews, and letters. Material has been found in such abundance that I have been able to use only a portion of it.

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MARGARET LEE RUNBECK

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The
Great Answer

PROLOGUE

Something New in the News

A STRANGE THING has been happening lately. It began about two years ago, and it goes on happening more and more often.

God gets His name in the papers. Not in headlines, always, as do lesser celebrities. But still it is there, down in the middle paragraphs. Somewhat hidden, but unmistakably there.

This book tells of fighting men — and women — and even some children — who have turned to God in the midst of danger, and of how they were answered. It doesn't tell the whole story; nothing could do that. It tells only a few headline stories. For every one that is here, there are probably thousands unwritten and untold. Unbelieved, almost, by the very ones to whom they happened.

The nature of all of us — much as we want to believe — is to discredit such things. Misunderstanding the character of good, we are afraid such stories as these are too good to be true. It is the oldest enmity on earth, this unbelieving. The sad secret of our alienation is that we always can explain away miracles — afterward.

But perhaps 'miracles' are invisible in ordinary moments. Perhaps, when looked at comfortably through the lens of logic and security, they disappear. Miracles

may be phosphorescent, so to speak; only to be seen in darkness.

Well, there has been dense darkness on this earth for some time, for lads alone in the sky, and men lost in the sea, for families plodding along roads, and children hiding in cellars. But in that darkness, some of these men and children have glimpsed events which glistened like light.

They knew we would seek to explain away those events; yet at the risk of ridicule, they have tried to tell us. They didn't have to try; they could have kept it for themselves. But out of terrible gratitude, and out of love for us, they wanted us to know that God is in the news today. Not only in words, but in works.

For many months I had been collecting such stories. Only for myself, of course. Then suddenly I saw that they belong to all of us. They are part of that wonderful, frightening, reluctantly welcomed tomorrow we are all guessing about. Every magazine advertisement is a hyperbole of promise about inventions and discoveries forced upon us by this war. These inventions, born out of horror, will be turned toward peace sometime, and will make the shape of tomorrow. Revolutionary things are happening in laboratories and factories. Maybe — just maybe — revolutionary things are happening in men themselves.

I decided, then, that I would look behind these brief newspaper clippings, and see what I could find. I thought of persons who could help me, Army and Navy chaplains, Red Cross workers, newspapermen — and of course Mr. MacPherson. Not only because he is a seaman, and seamen are close to violence and miracle these days, but mostly because of the kind of man he is.

'If you wanted news about God, you'd go first to a godly man,' I said to myself, and I wrote his name at the top of my list of sources.

We've been friends for a long time. Not so many years as the calendar marks off time, but long as reckoned in shore leaves. Mr. MacPherson gets back to our town three or four times a year, and we cover a lot of ground while he is there. We like each other, Mr. MacPherson and I. He likes me because he teaches me things. That shows him that I'm a nice woman who knows her place.

Mr. MacPherson was brought to see me by his relatives. When you're an invalid, people bring you soup and jelly; when you're a writer, they bring you their relatives. Especially anyone they consider 'quite a character.'

Mr. MacPherson came to our town in rather a characteristic way. He went to sea long ago, working himself up until he holds first officer's papers. All this time, he has intended to make himself a home on land.

'But that takes time,' he says patiently. 'A woman won't be hurried. Not a proper woman.' So, never having time to manage the proper woman, Mr. MacPherson finally settled for the home. A grandnephew of his, who had a rented house in our village, wanted to build a home. Mr. MacPherson gave him quite a large sum of money toward this house, with the understanding that there was to be one room in it which would belong to him.

It was to be a small room, because Mr. MacPherson has lived all his adult life in ships' quarters, and a room must fit him snugly if he is to be comfortable. It was to look out on a tree, and if Jock's children ever felt like planting a vegetable garden beyond the tree, on which Mr. MacPherson's window could also look, that would be all right.

There is nothing wistful in all this, of course. It is quite matter-of-fact.

'A man's mind needs certain things in it, just as the

body needs certain things in its diet. Different kinds of vitamins, you might say,' Mr. MacPherson says with dignity. 'A man's mind can get waterlogged after it has had too much of the one thing.'

I save up things I do not know, to ask Mr. MacPherson when he comes home, and he gives me information in a serviceable tweed voice, with all the 'a's' followed broadly by 'h's.' It adds a special burnish to Mr. MacPherson's wisdom to have the word 'grand' be 'grahnd' as he says it.

When he repeats dialogue to me in his stories, he refers to himself as 'Fairst,' meaning, of course, that he is the First Officer. To myself I always call him Fairst, but aloud that would be indecorous, so he is always Mr. MacPherson. It is a proud name as he says it, becoming Mahkphairson.

Mr. MacPherson and I, who have discussed every conceivable subject during our long friendship, had never mentioned God. But when you look into his kind, weathered face, and when you read between the lines of his yarns, you see such gentleness under the sternness, and hear such tenderness under the growls, that you cannot help knowing that here is a man who has never been very far away from God.

You cannot hear Mr. MacPherson describing a rain-storm after a parching day on the scalding Indian Ocean — you cannot hear him tell about a sick boy trying to get his broken crucifix mended before he died — without knowing that Mr. MacPherson's heart beats in rhythm with something bigger than itself.

When I told him about this book, he listened quietly until I had quite finished. He asked a few questions; I told him some of the stories I had already found. I brought out several letters from soldiers to show him, under the grape arbor which he so greatly admires. He read the letters and he nodded thoughtfully. He took

out his nice clean handkerchief from his immaculate breast pocket, and blew his nose vigorously. I knew about that, for I, too, had had to dab at my own eyes when I read some of those letters.

'I thought you might help me get acquainted with just the right seaman who could tell me a really wonderful story.'

He considered in long silence.

'I think I know the lad for you,' he said. 'His name is Eric Barcova, a Spanish Swede, if you can imagine. I'll send him a letter tonight, and when he is ashore we'll see him.' He went on talking about this lad. But behind his shrewd blue eyes there was a worried look.

'We've never talked about God before,' I said timidly.

'No, we have not.'

'People just don't seem to mention Him in ordinary conversation.'

He shook his head. Then he went over and snapped off a leaf from the grapevines, and held its tart stem between his teeth.

'I'm sure most people think about Him in some way,' I said. 'Even people who aren't church-goers.'

He came back across the flagstones, and looked down at me a long moment, and then he said:

'I hope this won't be too much of a shock to you. Perhaps I should have mentioned it before. But some way it never seemed to come up into the conversation.' His dark face was clenched fiercely like a fist, but he was too honest to spare himself the discomfort of going on.

'It shouldn't make any difference,' he said.

'Of course not, but what is it?'

'Well,' he said, turning his face from me, and then blurting it out with Scotch bluntness. 'I'm an atheist. I do not interfere with anybody else's faith. But for myself, I am an atheist.'

The whole garden was quiet. Mr. MacPherson put

on his gold-rimmed reading-glasses in agitation and looked into my face. I do not know what it said to him, but the grapevines spoke themselves, and an oriole in our elm spoke itself, and the summer sky from tree-top to horizon was a whole paragraph. Mr. MacPherson took them into account.

'I am an atheist,' he said doggedly. 'But I believe in man, and I believe in nature.'

I didn't take advantage of that; I didn't pounce upon it, nor try to argue. That reasonable, logical man — I could have confounded him with that. I could in fact have driven him into a rage, and torn our friendship limb from limb.

But I, too, believe in man, and as for me I cannot say where man leaves off and God begins.

He was taking something out of his pocket. I thought it was his package of cigarettes. It wasn't much bigger than that. But he didn't light one; he held the little object in his long brown hands.

'You may think it is a little strange,' he said, 'but I carry this little book with me. It's a Presbyterian Prayerbook and Testament. My mother gave it to me when I went to sea.'

He waited cautiously to see what I was going to make of that.

'Mind, I do not carry it for myself,' he said, almost angrily, after a moment. 'I carry it for the men on the ships. It's done them a lot of gude from time to time.'

'I'm sure it has.'

He glared at me, suspicious that I might accuse him, or argue with him, or try in some unfair way to convict him of faith. But I said nothing at all.

We were on that raft —

a hundred million of us —

THE RICKENBACKER STORY wasn't the first one that happened. But it was the one that aroused many of us to noticing. Once our eyes were opened to them, we realized that there had been other stories, scattered timidly across the news, which told of men who prayed for rain and had it, who prayed for help and it came.

The Rickenbacker story gave a lot of people courage to tell theirs. Prayers came back into fashion for many people, when Captain Rickenbacker and his men said shamelessly that they had prayed. Some people began praying, experimentally, for the first time in their lives. Others came out into the light and admitted they always *had* prayed. And, what's more, that God *had* heard them praying.

Captain Rickenbacker and his men have all told of the rescue. They have covered every angle of it.

All but one. They have not told our part of that rescue, ours, the hundred million people who shared that adventure on a raft.

I do not need to tell you how it was, for you know it. It happened to you, just as it happened to me, and to all of us. When Eddie Rickenbacker was lost, we didn't give him up. We read it in our morning papers, and a

stab of fear went through us, and then we said, 'No — he can't really be lost. Not Rickenbacker. He'll be back. Something will take care of him. You wait and see.'

Everybody felt that way. Mayor La Guardia asked the whole city of New York to pray for him, and I don't doubt that thousands of them did. Even the ones who didn't know how to pray had a kind of faith about him.

'He'll be back. You wait and see,' they said.

We waited and we did see. Some of us almost gave up. But not the taxi-driver, nor the boy with the shoe-shine box, nor Joe who sells papers, nor Mrs. McGinty. Nor Mrs. Rickenbacker. Nor I.

We weren't very logical about it; but we knew that there was something about Rickenbacker that couldn't be lost at this moment. Not because he was tough or invulnerable, exactly. No, it was something different. Perhaps it was the conviction which all of us had that helped bring him back. Or does that make any sense?

Well, anyway — he came back. You remember the morning. You remember the front page of the Sunday newspaper. You called the news upstairs to the children when you brought in the newspaper; you said, 'Hmm — that's great, isn't it?' You read down the column.

Four paragraphs down it was, in my newspaper, that that word occurred. 'God.' You don't often meet it in a newspaper. It gave you a funny feeling. And more than that. A strange excited feeling, as if something good had happened to all of us.

You read the words carefully. 'And this part I would hesitate to tell, except that there were six witnesses who saw it with me,' Captain Rickenbacker said. 'A gull came out of nowhere, and lighted upon my head — I reached up my hand very gently — I killed him and then we divided him equally among us. We ate every bit, even the little bones. Never did anything taste so good. . . .'

There was something so moving in those simple words — a sort of Biblical excitement about them — you were still standing in the middle of the floor reading them, and you felt your eyes prickling with a kind of tired tears . . .’

You couldn’t quite explain the tears. It was as if you’d terribly wanted something to be true which you had never really admitted, and now here it was on the front page of a newspaper. You remembered that dove which Noah had sent out to see if the flood had subsided enough for man to walk upon the earth again — here was the descendant of that dove, this gull which came out of nowhere and landed on a lost man’s head in the middle of the Pacific. You hadn’t read that story of Noah since you were a child; funny you should think of it now, standing here in the middle of the living-room floor reading a newspaper.

Sunday morning went on. Everybody spoke about it. Everybody had the same irrational feeling as if something good had happened to all of us, as if we had somehow been amplified by Rickenbacker and that gull, and those verses from Matthew read in the bobbing yellow rafts. In the middle of the afternoon, in the midst of the Philharmonic broadcast, suddenly the very air tingled. The music was broken off, and a clipped voice came from the loudspeaker saying that in a moment Captain Rickenbacker was going to speak. Then that curiously vibrant voice came on, not very sure of itself, terribly moving with earnestness, obviously reading the words, obviously stirred almost to the breaking of self-control.

Word for word he said what you had read that morning. You wanted more; you wanted it to go on from there.

If this could happen to those men, out on the Pacific, why couldn’t it happen to all of us all the time? If it’s true at all, it ought to be true everywhere, you said in-

side yourself. You wouldn't have said that out loud, of course. But you thought it to yourself.

Secretary Stimson said in the first meeting with the press: 'He has come back. I think more of him came back than went away.' More of us came back, too. More of you; you knew it.

Every little paper picked up the story; ministers preached sermons about it; there probably wasn't a person who didn't mention it to somebody. Everybody, from Eddie Cantor to Thomas Mann, made a public comment.

It wore off in a few days, of course. But those few days showed everybody one thing. Man at this moment is pretty homesick for God; he'd like some news of Him, some kind of sign that He hasn't forgotten.

Then, after a few weeks, full-page advertisements appeared in the newspapers. Eddie Rickenbacker was going to tell the story again. We could hardly wait; we wanted more terribly.

But now something had happened to the story. He hadn't added anything to it. No. Something had been taken away from it. It was written better, much better. It was full of gripping details, and even diagrams of how the men had fitted into those three tiny rubber rafts. But when it came to the Lord's part, it suddenly got very self-conscious.

I wasn't there, of course, when Eddie Rickenbacker was writing his story. I haven't any real way of knowing, but I can imagine what happened. Perhaps it was something like this: Good, experienced, hard-headed editors said, 'Listen, Rick, about that bird — of course there were lots of birds flying around all the time . . .'

'Yes, of course.'

'They'd naturally light on something . . .'

'Yes. But this was different — we had prayed . . .'

'Sure. Well, look — let's sort of tone down that part

a little — you were pretty emotional when you came back — anybody would have been, Rick . . .’

I can imagine Captain Rickenbacker protesting, and being embarrassed, and then finally just giving up. He has said he wasn’t really a religious man; he was inexperienced in finding those strange words to say what had seemed true. He had defended himself by making it clearly understood that he wasn’t accustomed. I can imagine how he felt . . .

As he himself says in his *Life Magazine* story: ‘Men place different values on experiences shared together. What stirred or depressed me may have seemed inconsequential to the others. While I sit in a Rockefeller Center office which I have all to myself, and where a push on a buzzer will summon nearly anything I need, much of what I went through on that ridiculously small raft now seems almost irrelevant. It is like trying to remember being dead.’

On the contrary, Captain Rickenbacker, I think it must be like trying to remember being *alive*, after you have died again into the conventional banality of everydayness.

In that tragic paragraph, so wry and wistful, lies all human loneliness, the terrifying doubt that what we know and feel can ever really be shared by anyone at all. In a grotesque, frantic way we settle for *anything* just so we can agree between us that it is true.

For of all the things men fear the most, there is no horror like the danger that we may be pushed out on a limb of aloneness, from which we see the thing differently from the rest of the race. Sometimes this human world seems like a fantastic, preposterous dream, but so long as we are certain we are all in the same dream, we do not need to worry too much about ourselves. It is only when we get outside it for a moment of clarity or madness that we are frightened.

We have told each other first-hand experiences about everything on earth. We have bolstered up and reinforced each other with recounted experiences. But the shape of the thing we fear the most we have not been able to form for each other. *For of that one experience we have never had a first-hand account.* Of death we have only the hearsay evidence of bystanders. Nobody has ever said to us, 'Let me tell you about the day I died — it happened like this.'

No, on second thought, there are two experiences we can't testify about. For no one has ever said, 'Did I ever happen to tell you about when I was being born?' But it's too late for us to fear that one; we got through that somehow, and whatever anguish we suffered is forgotten. So we concentrate our fear on the other rumor.

People who want to talk about it — well, they're queer and uncomfortable people. Even heroes who want to tell us how it did *not* happen. That is one of the first tragic cautions a hero must learn; not to talk too truly about it. Eddie Rickenbacker, and his men, learned it quickly.

When they first came back, those men *knew* what had happened to them; I hope they still know unshakably.

When Colonel Hans Christian Adamson was rescued, he wrote to his wife: 'I have found a nearness to our Creator which I have never known before, and I am certain that this new feeling is going to affect both our lives in the future. — While the drifting was a horrible experience, something wonderful has come of it.'

Corporal John F. Bartek said: 'I'm glad that plane fell. It took a lot of nonsense out of my life. I shall like the things I liked before, but there is something now inside me that won't permit me to forget that God stayed right by us out there.'

We must help those men hold on to their story. We must not let rationalization nibble it away. It must not

become merely a story of man's heroism, for it was much much more than that. It was a story of God's care.

Man's heroism we are accustomed to, this year. That is something we can get our teeth into. But that other thing . . . Well, we must keep holding to that, all of us hundred million people who have been on that raft with Rick.

You see, the reason it is so terribly important to us, why we read every word of it over and over, is that we *know* we're on a raft, each of us alone, when the last truth is told. We don't bother too much about it, but we know it. We know exactly what Captain Rickenbacker meant when he said, 'Let the moment come when nothing is left but life, and you will find that you do not hesitate over the fate of material possessions.' We have felt that, in extreme sickness and in grief, when we came inescapably close to verity. Over the bleak face of this earth rove thousands of refugees who have found that out in the last three years.

But here in America, most of the time we have been able to keep away from that edge of reality; we have amused ourselves and drugged ourselves and exhausted ourselves with our work and our possessions. But underneath we know, all right.

It is not always a desperate raft, of course; sometimes it has been gay and amusing and diverting, skipping over the expanse of nothingness all around us. But it is a raft, nevertheless, and we're not too sure where it's going, or where it came from, and we want with all our hearts to know that Something has us in His care.

And at the same time with wanting to believe it, we want also to disbelieve it. We are relatively safe and rational people living almost customary lives; we are delighted with our mentality because we have logical explanations for everything. If we can't explain it, then it probably didn't happen anyway.

This miracle that Captain Rickenbacker and his men brought back doesn't belong only to him. It belongs to all of us. All of us had it for a little while, even if we individually have lost it somewhere since that Sunday.

And yet, it may be that at the moment when each of us needs it again, it will come alive for us. 'Out of nowhere,' like the gull.

The Young Look Up

SHE was such a pretty girl that when she walked through the railway station, soldiers' and sailors' eyes swung helplessly after her. But she wasn't conscious of any of them. You wondered why; then you knew when you saw the silver wings pinned over her heart.

She was walking rather briskly, but suddenly she hesitated as if she had seen something startling. Then she changed her course, went over to a bench, and deliberately made room for herself so she could sit down beside a sailor. He was nothing particular to look at, just a tow-headed sailor with a battered, strapped-up box at his feet. It looked like one of those laundry boxes kids used to send back and forth from college, except that sailors can't pass the buck about laundry.

The girl sat there impatiently a moment, while the sailor squirmed in pleased bewilderment; then she said impetuously:

'Excuse me, but are you a chaplain?'

'Who? Me?' he gasped. Then he remembered the box at his feet. Crude, weathered letters had been painted on the lid of the box, 'Chaplain J. F. Jones,' and some numbers. 'Oh, that! No, a guy just happened to give me that once when I needed something to haul gear around in.'

The girl looked disappointed. 'Was *he* a chaplain?'

'Sure was,' the sailor said. 'The fightin'est guy you ever saw.'

They sat there in silence a moment, and the girl looked embarrassed and ready to leave. But the sailor said, 'You looking for a chaplain, Sister?'

'Not exactly,' she said. Then she blurted it out. 'I just want to talk to somebody about something — personal.' In a rush she was telling him what she probably couldn't have said to an intimate friend. 'I'm worried about letters I get from my boy friend. He's a flier, based in England. He's been going out over Germany . . .'

The sailor was sympathetic. He tried to explain how hard it was for men to write often; she mustn't worry.

'It isn't that,' she said. 'He writes as often as he can. It's what he says.'

'What's he say?'

'Well, every once in a while, he says something about — God.' She got one of the letters out of her hand bag and skipped through several sheets, then showed him a paragraph. He read it soberly. Then he looked carefully into her eyes.

'He must think an awful lot of you to write to you like that,' he said. 'Most of us don't ever talk about it.'

She took back the letter and put it away, and then she said, 'But — *I've* got to keep up with him. And I don't know where to begin.'

He looked at her a minute and measured her sincerity.

'Begin with the Bible,' he said. 'That's what a lot of guys have done lately. Just forget it's the Bible — just forget any prejudices you ever had about it. Maybe you thought it was just for old folks and drips. But it's for us. You start readin' it the way your boy friend is.'

She looked doubtful. 'Do *you* read it?'

'Once in a while,' he said, grinning honestly. 'Look,

Sister. I had a ship blown up under me off Africa. I was in the water six hours. Nothin' on earth could tell you what it was like. Stuff I'll never forget. Awful stuff. But there was something else, too.'

'What else?' she asked, almost in a whisper.

'Well.' For a minute it looked as if he wouldn't have the courage. 'I said things to God, and He said things back to me.'

They sat there, two American youngsters, trying to find words for talking about God, and the men who ask Him for help.

'But — Bob isn't that kind of man,' she said.

'Listen, Sister,' the sailor said. 'We're all that kind of men. When things get tough enough. Only guys that have never been in real danger think there's something pantywaist about asking help from God. God just for old folks? It's the youngsters, us kids in the thick of it, that *know*.'

I can't say whether or not all of those 'kids' know. Some seem to come back from the fringes of extremity, bringing out with them no consciousness of anything except hell and horror. But there are other persons — some of whose stories are in this book — whose very words are windows opening to vistas for which we have as yet no fixed vocabulary. When you talk with them, it is as if they are trying to describe a color your eyes have never seen. You bring all your reason and experience to it and your coldest judgment, and finally you have to admit that you're just not equipped to judge. You remember something you can't quite place which says, 'These things are hidden from the wise and prudent.' You try to explain it, but you feel yourself convicted of 'prudence' and safety — and conservatism.

Even the men who do not choose to talk to you about it seem to impart to you the fact that they have stood

on the edge of a realm of reality where you have not yet stepped.

Eloquent, articulate men have tried to say some of it occasionally, but many thousands who experienced the early days of the Battle of Britain will never try to tell about it. Those who can, however, bear witness in various ways to one strange yet unmistakable phenomenon. The fact was that British planes, outnumbered hopelessly, shot down Germans in droves from the skies over England. Besides being absurdly few in number, the British planes were practically obsolete, yet they were up against the cleverest planes ever built up to that time.

These were the epic days of which it was said, 'Never in the history of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.' How 'few' has not been specifically stated. But of the 'many' we can speak, because we — you and I, ourselves — are a part of them.

Early in the war I talked with Sir W — G —, of the Supreme Court of Judication, British Court of Appeals, who was in America for a few days. He is a most moderate man in his speech, and yet I heard him tell about this experience with eloquence so radical and beautiful that it might have come from Shakespeare or the Bible. He told about the little planes, and the people on the ground watching them almost fearlessly, as if a special formidableness had been bestowed. He said something like this:

'You could not see that happening day after day in the sky — one lone Hurricane, or two — shooting down formations of enemy planes, without knowing that spiritual strength is all that *can* conquer ultimately. However difficult it will be, the victory is inevitable.'

He told of a German pilot who was brought down with many others by four British planes. When he was asked why the numerically superior Germans had

turned to run away when there were only four planes attacking them, the German said, 'Four? Why, there were two hundred!'

Then this distinguished man asked me if I'd ever read the story of Elisha, who prayed that God would open the eyes of the youth who was fighting beside him so he could see 'those that be with us are more than they that be with them.'

Not wishing to embarrass me about my ignorance, he quickly told me that the young man's eyes *were* opened so that he saw the mountain full of 'horsemen and char-iots of fire.'

You talk to a few of the boys who mention their prayers as a factor in their adventures, and a baffled excitement and an impatience to *know* takes hold of you. You feel you'd just like to get your fingers on some handy little mental gimmick. ('Gimmick' is a word one of my friends in the theatre told me. It means a little device that will turn the trick in a magician's act.) You look and look for the gimmick. But I think there is no such thing. It is no trick, no magic. Unless faith can be called a trick. You try to define faith; you do it in words as skeptical as possible for the purposes of investigation. Maybe you say, 'Faith is a strong belief in something, whether it is true or not.' Then wells up in you the answer, 'But if it works, it must be true.'

When you're trying to define this thing that fighting men are discovering, you don't get much help from the boys themselves. When they come back, they don't have much to say. What happened was too deep and too desperate. If they mention it at all, it is often in some boyish wise-crack, and we who wait safely at home must learn to translate that into its proper dimensions.

What they say sometimes sounds flippant, except for what lies behind their words.

'God pulled a fast one that time,' a lad said, telling

about getting a burning plane back to the airport. A Marine who was dropped into a Jap-infested jungle, and had lain unseen for hours until the danger slunk past, said, 'The Lord sure must have put His Thumb on me, to keep those little termites from seeing me.' A merchant seaman who had been battered about on a raft for three weeks with a broken leg and two caved-in ribs said, 'He plays awful rough sometimes, but if you stick with Him He'll take care of you.'

Realistic, straight-looking youngsters are fighting this war, and what they have to say about the religion they are putting so dramatically to the test has no old-fashioned frills on it. Especially the fliers' faith. A mess hall with two hundred places in it couldn't have eighty vacant chairs after a raid over Germany, as one did have the other day, and have much hilarity and levity in it. The boys in that outfit have come to grips with the ultimate, and it isn't surprising that, as the *Readers' Digest* (December, 1943) says, in an article's title which makes the twentieth variation on the theme, 'There are no atheists in the skies.'

They pray, all right, those fliers; make no mistake about that. But it is their own business, and they do it in their own way, with no fancy words.

A story about a prayer — a continued story, in fact — is known to a number of people. Pilot Captain William R. Pritchard, of Mobile, Alabama, discovered that somebody had scribbled a message on the side of a plane turned over to him in North Africa:

God bless the crew of this plane. I will say a prayer for your safe return.

The crew didn't take the message too seriously at first. You can imagine how that would be with healthy American youngsters.

Then they were sent out on a very dangerous mission.

They ran into desperate trouble; they hung on to a prayer — not their own alone, but the one some unknown, faithful person had said for them, somewhere back in America where that bomber had been manufactured. And they came through.

The next time — and the next — they came through. There was less joking from then on. They kept the spot untouched where the message had been, even though it was almost unreadable by this time. They didn't say much about it to each other, but they all came to their own conclusions about it.

They have been out on more than a score of perilous trips now, and not one single member has been wounded or even scratched. Captain Pritchard has this to say about it:

'We, the crew, think there's something in that little prayer. After all, if it was just luck, the old law of averages would have ruled us out long ago. There have been all too many times when something above and beyond our armored protection and skill has pulled us through.'

Yes, as the tow-headed sailor told the girl in the station, 'The kids in the thick of it *know*.' Colonel Ivan L. Bennet, Chief American Chaplain at General Douglas MacArthur's Headquarters, says the closer men get to the front, the closer they draw to God. The curve of church attendance rises exactly as the danger rises.

All right. But what happens to that faith when the men are safe again? The chaplains say that when the men are withdrawn from action to rest camps, there is little decline. Even so, do you suppose faith will be sustained after the war is actually over? You can't prophesy too much about that. Maybe it depends on the boys themselves. And maybe it also depends on what they find we've done with their world while they've been away.

It's too early to say. Or is it? There must have been some men who found God in the last war. What became of them? That ought to tell something, hadn't it? I thought about that quite a while, and I looked around, and finally I discovered Commander John Andrew Quarrie, who knows a lot about God and a lot about war. One God, he says, but two wars.

He's a gruff-looking man. He has a huge, sharp-edged voice, meant to saw its way through shipboard battle noise. He has a stern, stony face, and if you had happened to be seeing him in a New York subway, and you let your eye wander down to the gold braid on his cuff, you would realize why he looks stern. For he is a Lieutenant Commander in the British Navy, and his insignia says he has seen a lot of service.

But if he turned and smiled at you, or spoke, you would realize that only the exterior of this man is stern. The interior is warm and sunny as a room with a southern exposure. I think I've never seen a man with an outside so northern and an inside so southern as Commander John Andrew Quarrie.

He was in New York awhile ago, acting as liaison officer on convoy duty between the United States Navy and the British Admiralty. It was a tame job, after what he has seen — Dunkirk, Tobruk, and some commando engagements. With him was a Wren, his wife Gladys, on compassionate leave to help a husband in the line of duty.

The Quarries are a five-sided family, and every one of them is in the Navy: twenty-three-year-old Ian on a Motor Patrol Boat; Pats, just past twenty, and a Wren, stationed at Portsmouth; and Ian's new wife, who also is a Wren.

Sometimes Commander and Mrs. Quarrie hear from the 'children' several times in the same week, quite fat letters stuffed with newspaper clippings and snap-

shots; other times they don't hear from any of them for weeks on end. But they don't worry; at least they say they don't. For every one of the children 'was born with a Bible, as other people's children were born with silver spoons in their mouth.'

'They know how to take care of themselves,' Commander Quarrie says earnestly. 'They let God take care of them.'

The 'children,' of course, have all been born since the last war. And it was during the last war that Commander Quarrie made his discovery. He was a youngster then, about Ian's age. Only quite a different boy from Ian. Tempestuous and tough, full of doubts and cussedness, he says. He was an R.N.R. Lieutenant during that war, and *Blackwood's Magazine* recently had a story about him on submarine duty in the North Sea.

Somebody gave him a Bible, he says, and he used to carry it in his gear, but he never saw it among his useful possessions without getting furious with himself for bringing it along.

'Couldn't make head nor tail of it,' he says. 'I used to try to read it, and it seemed full of contradictions and denials. I'd try and try to get something out of it, and then I'd throw it down, and say to hell with it.'

Every time he was transferred to another ship he would intend to leave the Bible behind. But it always turned up among his belongings, and he'd go through the whole thing over again. Idly sitting down to read it, and then getting mad as the dickens because he just couldn't make any sense out of it. This went on during almost the whole of the war.

Then he met a chap who seemed to understand it. They argued, and young John was delighted, because here was something he could strike out at with his fists. Here was something he could get his teeth into. So they argued night after night. In secret John began

studying the Bible as he had never studied it before — just to get arguments his friend couldn't answer.

But gradually the Bible opened for him. Not as a book written centuries ago, full of obscure shalt-nots pertaining to an obsolete civilization, but as something living in the present, and talking about the present world. A compass, by which a man could chart his course.

His friend said, 'Look here, John. If you read it right, it's a kind of textbook on navigation.'

'How do you mean "read it right"?'

'I mean literally. Just what it says. Take that verse in the Forty-Sixth Psalm, "The Lord is my help and my salvation." Take that literally. God gave us our intelligence, and our resourcefulness. He is our intelligence. Not far off; right here.' They talked about resourceful things which they had seen themselves — and other men — do in an emergency.

'But that's just presence of mind,' John said. 'Everybody has it at times.'

'All right,' his friend agreed. 'That's what it is called. Presence of mind. And what do you suppose that mind is?'

At the peak of his excitement about his discovery, the war ended. When he came home, John was a changed man. He disappeared many times a day; when Glad couldn't find him, she'd go looking through the house and there he would be, reading and reading his Bible and another book which had explained it to him.

He said, during those first months, there was nothing in the world which was as much alive and as challenging for him as this study. Everything he did, he did in terms of this new understanding which had come to him.

Throughout the years he and his family have lived strictly according to the Bible and its promises of pro-

tection. They say it has brought them through everything and has kept them happy and carefree, and I must say they appear at this moment to be exactly that.

When Commander Quarrie received his assignment in this war, it was for active sea duty as first officer on a medium-sized Channel steamer—a re-fit which was to be used as a naval escort ship. Before Italy entered the war, his ship helped maintain the blockade against Germany. Later it was sent to the Mediterranean to carry supplies to Egypt and to take off prisoners of war from various African ports and deposit them in Alexandria. This re-fit became such a familiar sight, steadily plying between ports carrying as many as seven hundred Italian prisoners at a time, that the crew members affectionately called her the ‘Libyan Local.’

But one day, when Commander Quarrie’s boat was to be part of a convoy sailing from Tobruk, he had a chance to put his faith in God’s protection to a severe test. Just before they sailed, Tobruk was bombed, and, in addition, an enemy plane was seen to drop three mines in the harbor. Mine-sweepers had disposed of two of these mines, but the third could not be found. They believed that it was planted outside the channel, but they couldn’t be certain. Though they knew they were taking a risk, the officers decided to try and get out of the harbor as they had planned.

The Italian prisoners were making a terrific clamor, for they were terrified, afraid to start out on the ship, afraid to stay in the city. Commander Quarrie ordered that every man put on a lifebelt. He himself went up to the bridge to help the Captain, a four-striper. The two of them were working at a table in the wheel-house when the ship touched off the mine. They heard practically no noise from the explosion, but their chairs seemed to drop from under them. Off to one side of the boat a huge spout of water towered up into the sky.

As soon as he could get his balance, Commander Quarrie leaped to the telegraphs to signal the engine room, but one control was jammed solid and the other was only a flimsy flutter in his hand. He ran out on the bridge, and below him there was a sea of hysterical Italians surging up from the decks. They were yammering and screaming, utterly terrified. He shouted to them to go back, and made his way down to the deck. By this time men had run up from the engine room which was rapidly filling with water, and the whole ship had rolled over, so that it seemed it would be impossible to get off the lifeboats. But the Italians were not waiting. They were pouring into the lifeboats, trampling over each other and screaming. Ten deep, Commander Quarrie says they looked to him.

'Never mind the lifeboats. You'd better depend on your belts,' he shouted to them, and it was a good thing he did, for the ship went down before the lifeboats could be launched.

Commander Quarrie ran below to check on the condition of the ship. Men were pouring up from the engine rooms; some had been injured or killed. It took but a moment to realize that the ship herself had been mortally wounded and that she was going to sink in a hurry.

When he saw there was nothing he could do to help the vessel, he ran along a corridor to his own cabin with some vague boyish idea of getting his best coat, a new coat which he had been saving for an occasion worthy of it . . .

'This is the occasion,' he was saying to himself. 'No time like the present.'

But he was saying much, much more than that. His mind, as men say happens in moments of emergency, seemed to be made up of several layers of thinking going on simultaneously. Under the top layer, which was

directing him to run down and get his coat and some valuables he had locked in his desk — some personal papers and some money and two watches which had long been in his family — was a second layer, which was coldly reasoning that he must stay on the high side of the boat, and that he must utilize the swirl of the water to sweep himself off the deck, and not be caught in it in such a way that it would trap him inside.

But louder and even more calm than all this, he says, was a constant monologue of promise and assurance from the Bible. A stream of verses he had not even been aware of memorizing.

‘The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy.’

‘With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.’

A great peace seemed to possess him, as he put on his best coat and tried to put his Bible into the pocket. But the Bible was too big for the pocket, and none of the other valuables seemed to come to his hand. The water was rising so high on the portholes that the cabin was in twilight, and he knew he must leave. He ran out, and up the companionway to a closed deck, shouting assurance to several panic-stricken men he met. One almost-demented prisoner he had to shove before him as he ran. He came out on the high side of the ship, but almost at that instant the water came over the side in a great rush. There was a heavy door with fitted steel plates which he knew the water would close when it came, and he avoided that, clinging like very paint to a stanchion. When the first force had subsided, he let himself be swirled around so that he was flung free when the ship sank.

Suddenly he realized that, in spite of his own orders which everyone else had followed, he himself had put on no lifebelt. He was deep under the surface of the water, and a great temptation came to him just to let go. His whole body was full of pain, for he had wrenched his back badly, and he felt he could not swim. He wanted only to drift and sleep. But he tried to prod himself, realizing, he says, that this was only 'an argument inviting death and consenting to death, when the world needs men who are alive and can fight.'

The battle then, he told me, was terrific. It was a double fight, with the water, of course, and also with his own mind which seemed so numbed that it wanted only to stop thinking and give up. But he kept rousing his mind, as best he could, and trying to make his mind rouse his body so it would swim.

One after another words began forming a chain to which his mind could cling, something to hold on to, something connecting him with safety and love and home.

'Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof . . . God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. . . .'

The ancient beautiful words reached him below the surface of the water and quickened him into dazzling clearness. He knew then that he would swim with strength infinitely greater than his own small human strength.

As I write these words, and as you read them, they have not the dignity and the simplicity with which he says them. But you must remember that he is a very manly kind of man, whose life has been lived in realism and common sense, in danger and among men. When you look at him, and hear him mention the al-

most childlike standard of conduct which motivates him, you cannot help wondering if there is a way of being formidable which the world is only beginning to guess about.

When he came to the surface, almost the first thing he saw was a lifebelt floating not far away, and he reached it and held on to it, lying back and being grateful because he was alive.

He began swimming after he had rested, and his first thought was that he would take off his heavy shoes. But so great was his expectation of rescue that he realized he must keep his shoes on, because walking bare-foot through the desert would be impossible. He swam awhile, among the *débris*, and then a voice called out to him from a distance away, and it was his Captain who had been picked up in a boat.

Out of over five hundred men, only seventy-seven were lost, and when Commander Quarrie tells this you can see that this high percentage of rescue is part of what he considers the answer to his own prayers. Not just that he himself should be saved, of course, but safety for everyone who could accept it.

He was taken on to Alexandria by corvette. There he was supposed to wait for orders and for a new ship. He walked around the city, a rather sorry-looking sight, in a shrunken and bedraggled best coat and a derelict pair of trousers.

He went over to an officers' club, hoping he might run into someone who could outfit him a little more respectably. The difficulty was that Commander Quarrie is a man with a large and powerful torso, but somewhat short legs. As he came into the club, he realized there was some kind of party going on. Down the hall, with his back turned to the door, was a figure built quite like his own.

'There's just the chap,' he said to himself. 'I'll see

if I can borrow a decent pair of pants from him.' He approached apologetically. The figure turned, and it was his own son Ian.

When they got around to talking about something so mundane as pants, Ian had to admit that he didn't have any extra ones himself. You see, he, too, had been in a blow-up. Several, in fact, he admitted a bit sheepishly.

'So, though I didn't get the pants,' Commander Quarrie says, 'he could give me something I needed just as badly.'

'What was that?'

'A picture of his mother. I don't feel properly dressed unless I have some little picture of Glad on my person.'

I try to imagine the meeting between father and son. I know they talked of God's part in their adventures as naturally as they talked about their own. I find a strange excitement in imagining their conversation, and I cannot help wondering if perhaps there is a new fashion in men upon this earth. These are not mealy-mouthed men, these two. They are strong, adventure-some people, and the last thing you could associate with them is softness or helplessness. They don't need human help; human help alone would be too puny to do some of the jobs these men do.

Lieutenant Ian Quarrie has had plenty of chances to prove for himself the protective power of prayer — at Dunkirk, and on commando duty, and at Crete. He is on his fifth boat at the moment, four others having been knocked from under him. The youngster is in command of a motor torpedo boat, one of the 'Flyweights,' which the Admiralty so proudly says are the 'Terrors of the Fleet.'

One of the special tasks of these little boats is to clear out the mines, both the magnetic and the acoustic mines, which the enemy drops in the important har-

bors. The technique is to plunge the little boats over the mines with enough speed so that they will be safely clear by the time the mine explodes. Naturally this is an extremely dangerous operation.

This adventure of young Lieutenant Quarrie was told me by his mother, who says that her son always starts his day with a few minutes of quiet study, before he goes on duty. On this particular morning he had time for only one verse of the Bible, but he grabbed that up and carried it with him.

For some reason the usual method of exploding the mine failed to work. The little boat just didn't get away in time. When the explosion came, it blew the boat and the men into the air as if they'd been dust. Ian himself was blown so high that he had to push himself with his own hands out of the way of the mast.

The little boat was utterly demolished. It lay in splinters in the water. But the miraculous thing was that every single man on the ship came out alive. Some of them were pretty badly shaken, but not one was killed. All that was the matter with Ian himself was that he couldn't sit down for a few days.

When you talk to these people, these sober yet gay veterans, you cannot help seeing how alive is their faith. You cannot help knowing there is nothing flimsy about it; it is not donned in panic like a lifebelt. It is the bone and sinew of them, as close to them as they are to themselves.

If you sincerely want to know, they gladly tell you, and you may accept it or not as you please. It is in exactly this spirit that I have tried to show it to you. I make no attempt to defend it, or explain it, one way or the other; I only submit the evidence.

*They and the Lord*¹

BUCK TORRENTE is a handsome youngster. He's a fighter and a singer. Good at both jobs, too. He fought as a hundred-and-thirty-six-pound preliminary boy at Madison Square Garden, and he sang as a choir-boy at Saint Veronica's when he used to live down in Greenwich Village in New York.

Of course that was all awhile ago. This last year, Buck has been pretty busy being a Marine at Guadalcanal. He was a good Marine, also, as you might expect. They taught him how to use a gun, but when the big moment came, he forgot about the gun and became just a good ring fighter. The way Buck captured the first Jap prisoner taken by his outfit is one of their favorite stories.

He was going along, minding his own business, with his gun slung over his shoulder, and suddenly a Jap loomed up in front of him. Buck dropped the gun, so the legend goes, and gave the Jap a fine slug of one-two. Then he picked him up, without waiting for the count, and hauled him off.

But on October 15, 1942, Buck himself was wounded in an ambush. He was on a weapons platoon, manning a sixty-millimeter mortar. In order to study Jap positions, a volunteer patrol had advanced far into enemy

¹ This title is borrowed from *Time Magazine*, December 21, 1942.

territory, and of course Buck Torrente was one of the first volunteers. There he and Sergeant Steven Kupiec, who shared the rest of the Pacific adventures with him, were badly wounded by shrapnel and bullets.

'Whoever said, "There is no atheism in foxholes" said right,' Sergeant Kupiec commented in a newspaper account of the battle afterward. 'We felt His presence with us in our foxholes with the deep sincerity and thankfulness that come only from being so close to Him every minute of the day and night that you can almost feel His hand guiding you.'

After the ambush battle, the outfit moved Kupiec and Torrente to a hospital for treatment, but during the next four days, Buck developed a bad case of malaria. The doctors decided they'd better send as many of the badly wounded as they could out of that particular hell to a safer hospital on another island.

From Henderson Field a big Douglass D-C3 Army transport with a six-man crew and nineteen wounded soldiers, sailors, and Marines, made a take-off in the midst of terrific bombing and shelling. Buck says he was 'praying about as fervently as anybody ever did, I guess, when we took off. The Japs were shelling us all the time, and had knocked our radio to smithereens.'

The transport plane was a shapely piece of business which the crew called *Lana Turner*. Just as Lana was tearing down the runway, a chunk of Jap artillery hit her, and a piece of shrapnel knocked her compass, as well as her radio, out of commission. In the excitement someone kicked open the gas valve, and before it could be closed, eighty gallons of gas poured out.

Lieutenant C. E. Petty, the pilot, had no choice but to keep going, so he flew the best he could for twelve hours, not knowing just where he was, because of his disabled compass, but hoping some kind of landing place would turn up before his gas gave out.

By dawn there still was nothing below them but the angry ocean, with here and there a sharp-toothed coral reef which wouldn't be a fit landing field for anything but a gull. With only a few cupfuls of gas left in his tanks, he knew he'd have to pick the next reef he saw and crash-land his ambulance plane on it.

'You go back and tell the kids, Gene,' he said to his co-pilot. So Co-Pilot Ecklund went back into the tail of the plane, where the wounded boys were lying on their stretchers.

'If any of you guys know how to pray,' he said, 'maybe this would be a good moment. We've got to go downstairs, and there isn't any rug under us.'

Buck and Kupiec looked at each other; they both had been altar boys once; they'd found that out about each other, when they had fought together in a foxhole.

The two pilots gritted their teeth and strained their eyes, but there was not a sign of any land. And then there was a white lace ruffle of foam, and they knew it marked the outline of a coral reef.

In an account of it which Buck Torrente wrote to me afterward he said: 'The Lord again was with us, as an uncharted reef appeared in the trackless waste of water, just as our engines began to sputter. The pilot said, "Thank God for putting that reef where it is!" We all felt it was a miracle.'

They brought Lana down as gently as they could in a wheels-up crash landing. She glided and scraped, and dipped one wing so deeply in the water that they thought for a second she was going under; then she righted herself and settled. The reef was about six feet under the surface of the water, and Lana was up to her neck in waves. The cabin was three and a half feet deep in water at low tide and seven and a half at high.

Everybody was pretty badly shaken up when she landed, but they stifled their moans, and those that

could crawled back off the floor onto their stretchers and said, 'Sure — I'm okay — take care of somebody else.'

The crew rigged up hammocks out of parachute ropes, and hung the worst-wounded up near the ceiling, where they would at least be dry. Those that could be dragged they moved out through the plane door, and laid along the top of one sloping wing. The other wing, crumpled badly, was partially under water. Lieutenant Colonel R. M. Pate, who had a painfully infected leg, was put in the cockpit, with his leg tied up over the instrument panel to try to relieve the throbbing.

It was a most inconvenient unbalance between the sick men and those that were able-bodied. Six well men, and nineteen who had to be taken care of.

The crew inflated their two rubber rafts and moored them beside the wreckage for sleeping quarters. But nobody could sleep much, though they kept quiet in case some guy was resting.

They faced the food situation frankly, and decided they had enough rations and water for four days if they were careful of it. Ensign Gordon Vanderford and three of the Marines decided to take one of the rubber boats and see if they could find any land. Before they left, they figured out their position by the stars, in case they found any help to send back.

By the first night, the rubber boat made another reef about fifteen miles away, but then the wind changed, and became a stiff wall erected against them. For two days and nights they beat themselves helplessly against it, and then finally turned back, bringing a bird and a couple of fish they had shot.

'We sure hated to go back,' said Vanderford. 'The fellows on the plane were depending on us so much.'

By now the seas were mighty rough, and they weren't even sure they'd find Lana and her brave boys clinging to the reef. But when they rowed in sight, there she was,

a little more broken up by the waves than when they'd left, but still steady.

Just as the crew in the boat shouted to the men inside the plane, a huge wave capsized the rubber boat, and they lost their precious bird and fish, and the rifle besides. But the men in the plane were relieved to see them, for they'd been given up in the bad weather.

It was raining now, and they caught all the drinking water they needed in their helmets, but the food was about gone. Besides being hungry the men were weak from untended wounds, and the ravaging malaria.

Sunday morning came, and Buck Torrente, hanging up near the ceiling, said to his pal, Steven Kupiec, 'What'd you be doing if you were home right now?'

'Me?' said Kupiec. 'I'd be reading the funny paper in Dorchester, Mass., and my wife would be baking griddle cakes and frying bacon. What'd you be doing?'

Buck said, 'I'd be coming home from Saint Veronica's about now.'

Everybody in the cabin was quiet for a few minutes, and then a lanky private with a shot-up arm crept down off his bunk, and sloshed around in the water until he found his own pack. It was waterlogged as a crocodile, but he got it unzipped, and he rooted around in its sodden contents until he found a sailors' Testament that somebody had given him.

Every man in the cabin was watching him; every one of them was wondering what he was going to do with the little book. He handed it to Ensign Herbst and said, 'Would you conduct a service, sir?'

The junior-grade lieutenant swallowed hard, and looked embarrassed. Then he opened the soaked little book and began to read. He didn't pick anything special; he just read them as they came. There wasn't another sound in the cabin. The men propped themselves up on their elbows to listen better, for the waves out-

side were noisy, and Herbst was reading fast and low, the way a man does who's not accustomed to reading aloud. But they heard him all right, and he went on reading. He forgot himself now, and he read better. His voice was clear by the time he had reached the 'Prayer for sailors in storms at sea.'

'That's us, all right,' somebody said. 'Read us that, sir.'

So he began the beautiful words, 'O most powerful and glorious Lord God, at whose command the winds blow and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stillest the rage thereof . . . we cry unto thee for help.'

When he finished, several of the men said, 'Amen,' and there was more silence. Then Buck Torrente, the boy who had once thought maybe he was going to be a champion prizefighter, remembered that he was also a singer. He lifted up his voice and sang. It was a rich old hymn, 'O Thou and the Lord.' He sang it through, and some of the others mumbled along with him. They sang several others, and then Kupiec remembered that he had once learned the Twenty-Third Psalm, so he repeated that.

'The Lord is my shepherd,' he said; 'I shall not want.' He went on steadily to the end '. . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' Their eyes were wet, many of them, for they had been afraid they were never going to see any 'house' again.

Buck says: 'There was a Marine colonel, an Army major, and Navy officers there, as well as enlisted men of all the services and the plane's crew. And every man got solace and strength from the prayers.'

'We read the Lord's Prayer aloud; even the surging sea seemed a bit more calm after that. Certainly our souls were calm . . . and we waited. . . .'

Ensign Herbst closed the book then, and said, 'That will be all, men, until next Sunday.'

'Until next Sunday.' The grim words got the thing out in the open for the first time. Nobody knew where they were — they had been on the reef for days, and before another Sunday came the sea surely would have battered the plane to splinters. They had no food left — they were all pretty sick — their radio had been dead since the Jap bullet hit it. . . .

'Until next Sunday.' Their minds turned back from trying to imagine next Sunday, resting instead on the words of the Psalm, 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'

And then something happened, but they didn't even know. They didn't know that back at Henderson Field, men had been out in planes looking for them, for they had no radio to pick up news, nor any transmitter to send out distress calls. But Corporal Larry Ingalls and Corporal Roy Meuret, the radiomen on the *Lana Turner*, had never given up trying to repair the smashed radio equipment. They had tinkered night and day, hopeless as it seemed, and suddenly, unknown to them, one of their messages came through, as feeble as a pulse but still discernible.

The almost miraculously received message, according to Bill Henry, the *Los Angeles Times* columnist who just happened to be present at the rescue, was picked up by a patrol boat and relayed along. Within minutes planes were fanning out over the waters of the Pacific looking for Lana on her reef.

The swift land planes, which couldn't possibly pick up the men, got there first, and radioed back the location. They swooped down over Lana, so low, as they dropped blankets and food, that they could see the wild weak joy on the faces of the wounded men lying on the wings of the wreck. Soon the Navy seaplanes came and settled down on the water near the reef, getting ready to take off the men. As gently as they could, they moved

them one by one in rubber boats across from the *Lana Turner* to the Navy planes. There they gave emergency treatment and made all the rescued men as comfortable and as dry as possible.

But it all had taken time, and night had closed down on the scene. The sea was much too rough for the pilots to risk a take-off in the darkness. After all, these boys had been through two terrific, separate ordeals in two weeks, first being wounded in battle, and then lying helpless in the open sea for days and days.

They were just settling down for their tenth night, tossing on the waves in a frail little ambulance plane, when a very angel appeared on the horizon. A Navy destroyer! Sick as they were, the boys gave a feeble cheer for the U.S. Navy and all its wonderful care.

The destroyer came as close as it dared for fear of grounding on the reef, and the patients were transferred once again, this time to the dry, solid comfort of the sick bay. Under forced draft the destroyer dashed to an island, where every possible care had been prepared for these heroes.

To the battered boys who had endured so much so uncomplainingly, it must have seemed indeed that 'angels bore them up in their hands' at last. After they had been moved back to the San Diego Naval Hospital, Bill Henry sent them some photographs which he had taken from the rescue plane, looking down on their trusty old *Lana Turner* clinging to the reef.

Boys like these don't express gratitude and emotion glibly, but one of them wrote back to Mr. Henry: 'Thanks for the photographs. You can't see it in the picture, but there were tears in our eyes when your plane flew overhead.'

Bill Henry when he wrote me a letter about it said: 'God bless those kids. Fact is, there were tears in my eyes, too.'

A Lot of It Has Been Going On —

THERE ARE FEW LIBERTIES a Scotchman forgives so reluctantly as an intimate conversation. For a while it looked as if I had lost Mr. MacPherson entirely. A word, it seemed, had come between us, and he was pretty embarrassed about it. When I met him at the post office he was in a terrible hurry, and it was Jock's twelve-year-old boy who brought back the books Fairst had borrowed from me.

But finally he came himself, on strategy bent. He was disarmingly pleasant, not to say effusive, for him. He told me jokes and offered to show me how to make a genuine Indian bag pudding some day, and was his most ingratiating self.

'You know, I never told you,' he said confidentially, 'but when I was a lad, I thought maybe I'd become a writer myself.'

'Did you, now?' I said, trying my best to look surprised. Having heard this confession from practically everyone I've ever known, I've discovered that surprise is the tactful way of receiving it.

'In my time,' he said ponderously, 'I've collected a few very desirable and unique sea stories. I've been thinking' — he stuck his sharp eye like a bright pin into my expression — 'I've been wondering if it wouldn't be a fine idea if you and I should collaborate, in a way. I

could tell you some rollicking stories, and you could write them down. We could do a book.'

I saw his little plan; I have used it myself with children full of dangerous business, when I wanted to divert them into something safer.

'But I'm already writing a book,' I said determinedly, exactly the way these same children quite often turn my good intentions back in my face.

He glared at me fiercely. He tried to look as if he didn't remember what I was talking about. Then he said casually: 'Oh yes, I recall. But I don't think you can make much of a book of that. It's a very dry subject . . .'

'On the contrary,' I said, 'I've found some wonderfully exciting stories already.'

'Is that so?' he said coldly. For a hundred dollars he wouldn't have asked me what some of the stories were; that would have made it appear that it wasn't such a dry subject. So I told him.

'Well, for instance, I have a story about six Marines who were lost in a Guadalcanal jungle for five nights. Would you call that dull?'

'Depends on what they did,' he said cautiously.

'There was a forty-eight-man platoon on outpost duty beyond the Yank positions. The Japs swarmed around them and cut them off completely from the rest of the outfit, in an attempt to recapture an airfield. Two men were killed and ten were badly wounded. The men scattered and the six who got lost were reported "missing in action."'

I went up to my desk and got the clippings, and he put on his gold-rimmed spectacles critically. He ignored completely the headline: "'Prayed and Prayed," say Yanks lost in Jap lines.'

He began reading down through the story, skipping the paragraphs which told about the prayers.

“But let Private Hollinger tell the story,” he read. “When the Japs came in around us it was dark, there was a lot of shooting going on, and we couldn’t tell what the score was. We camouflaged ourselves and lay low for the night. There were an awful lot of Japs.”

Mr. MacPherson’s ready sympathy was engaged now, and his eyes looked full of kindness as they usually do.

“Those jungles are dirty places,” he said. “Full of swamps that a mon can neither swim through nor walk across. I was in one once myself. You take a step and sink to your thigh. Something clutches your leg and you can’t tell whether it’s a reptile or a poisonous vine—nasty places for our boys to be lost.”

His eye went back to the clipping and before he could stop himself he read: “Well, we just prayed and kept moving. And, believe me, we did a lot of praying.” Neither of us said anything about that paragraph, and he went on unfolding the story of how the Japs, with leaves sewn to their clothes, ran noiselessly through the shadows, looking for the boys who were lying, still as death, in plain view, praying and holding their breath.

From behind them, their own outfit was firing at the Japs, and they were in the way so that one of their men was hit twice. At another time a four-man patrol of Japs spotted them, but Private Richard Hollinger managed to kill two of them. He was too modest to tell about it himself, but his pal, Pharmacist’s Mate Homer Berry, told it.

“Dick is the guy that shot them,” he said. “He had a Springfield, and it sounded like a machine gun, he was shooting so fast.” They tried to get the rice rations from the dead Japs, but there were too many live ones sniping at them to take a chance. So they had to go on being hungry as the dickens for the whole five days.

“That’s a very interesting story,” Mr. MacPherson said, putting down the clipping and picking up another

one with the headline 'Cross Saves Yank Pilot from Aborigine's Spear.' This was a story sent from Darwin, Australia, by H. R. Knickerbocker, Chief of the *Chicago Sun's* foreign service.

It told about a pilot named Clarence S. Sanford, of Auburn, New York, who was chasing Jap planes over the Pacific when he got separated from the rest of his squadron. Not knowing where he was, he flew along with nothing but water under him. When his tank ran dry, he was still over the ocean, so he took a long glide at the optimum angle. But even though he nearly made land, the plane sagged down just too soon, and he had to bail out.

He landed easily in the water, but his life belt wouldn't inflate, and he was at least three miles from land. He had never swum such a distance in his life, but he disentangled himself from his parachute harness, and kicked off his clothes and swam for dear life, praying as he went.

When he dragged himself up on the beach he was exhausted, and fell into a coma. He awoke to feel a sharp instrument digging into his chest, and there, towering over him, were two naked Australian aborigines.

'You Jap?' asked the native, holding back the spear a moment.

'In the name of Jesus, no. I'm an American,' Mr. Knickerbocker quotes Sanford as saying.

But the aborigines prodded deeper with their spear, evidently intending to kill him. Then suddenly one of them noticed the only thing Sanford was wearing — a little silver cross.

Immediately they withdrew the spear, and cried out reverently: 'Jesus Number 1 man.'

They helped Sanford up, gave him food and took care of him, leading him through the jungle for twenty-

five miles to a mission. His feet were torn with the journey and the sun baked him almost beyond recognition, for he was stark naked. But when they reached the mission, he found that these two natives were the only ones who ever came to that particular beach. If they hadn't found him, he certainly would have perished.

The boy, and the missionaries, and even the natives who recognized the religious symbol of their Number 1 man, all felt that it was an answer to the young American's prayers.

'I often wonder what kind of people do the praying,' Mr. MacPherson said. 'When I was a boy you could practically tell by looking at people whether they were praying people or not.'

'How could you tell?'

'Well, I don't want to offend you,' he said, 'but they never seemed to me very good company, if you know what I mean. Mealy-mouthed, if I may use the word.'

'You may use it all you please,' I said, 'but I don't think it applies to the boy *this* story's about.' This was taking a slightly unfair advantage of Fairst, for I happen to know how keen he is, in a sheepish sort of way, about prizefighting.

He recognized the picture without having to look down into the story, for it was Barney Ross himself. Barney isn't a world's welterweight and lightweight champion in the ring any more, but he is a Marine hero. The report says he bagged as many as ten Japs while he stood guard over three wounded comrades at Guadalcanal.

'Barney Ross, hmm?' Fairst said incredulously. 'What's he got to do with praying, for Pete's sake?'

'Plenty,' I said, and I read him Barney's words from the *New York Daily News*: "'We figured there was no real chance of getting out. We were all scared to death.

All we could do was pray. We must have prayed for a solid hour.”

‘Is that so?’ he said, as noncommittally as possible.

Then I hammered down some more of my unfair advantage, knowing that next to prizefighting, my friend Mr. MacPherson loves football. The story was so recent I’d not had time to cut it out of the newspaper yet.

‘Who’s this?’ he said suspiciously, blinking at the headlines.

‘It’s Tom Harmon — seems to me he used to play football at Michigan, didn’t he?’

‘Umm. I was reading about him,’ Fairst said meekly. ‘Had quite an experience in Dutch Guiana.’

‘His plane went into a spiral, and the crew had to bail out. Two of them were killed, and the other three are missing — but Tom Harmon got back,’ I said. ‘Took him four days to get through the jungle, wading and swimming, and fighting off insects. And what do you suppose he did all the time!’

‘I can’t imagine,’ he said gruffly.

‘This is what he said’ — I was so excited I could barely find the paragraph. ‘Harmon said one thing that worried him was his parents. “They are getting along in years, and I hoped they would not give up hope. I prayed and prayed to get out, and prayed that the shock of me missing would not cause them serious illness.”’

‘I imagine a nice lad like that would think about his parents,’ Fairst said, trying to change the subject.

‘And listen to this!’ I cried. ‘Remember that he didn’t have anything with him — he had had to jump out of a plane, and naturally he hadn’t brought along any trivial stuff with him. But this is what he *did* bring with him. “One thing I had with me was my Prayer Book, and I used it every night.”’

Fairst had nothing at all to say; he looked at me al-

most guiltily, but as if he weren't sure just what to apologize about. But I kept at him:

'Meantime, his parents back in Ann Arbor — what do you suppose *they* were doing?' I asked breathlessly.

'I know what they were doing,' Fairst said gloomily. 'They were praying, I suppose.'

Then we looked at each other and grinned. Fairst took out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead.

'Seems to me there's been a heck of a lot of praying going on lately,' he said.

'That's just what I think. That's why I want to do this book.'

'Okay,' he said. 'If I should happen to run across anything in my travels, I'll let you know. I don't imagine I'll find much — I can't promise anything.'

The Moving of the Mountain

EIGHTY LITTLE GIRLS and two nuns in occupied France and a prisoner in Germany said a prayer, and that prayer moved a mountain.

A whole string of mountains, in fact. The Pyrenees. They stood, that dark December morning, between escape and an American girl and her baby. But the prayers took shape in a deed of courage, and in a few days the mountain was at their back, and they were facing freedom.

Rose-Hélène is the daughter of a French father and an American mother. She had her fifth birthday in New York the other day. Behind that birthday lay a turbulent small life with nothing fixed in it except the love of her mother and the memory of her father. The devotion of all of them is to an ideal of freedom in which agony is not a personal misfortune but only an unimportant price with which to purchase a future for the world.

You might think that a baby would forget her father after he has been three years in a prison camp. But Rose-Hélène has not forgotten. Only the other day she said, out of a clear sky:

'He threw me up in the air, and he was laughing. . . . Then he put his hands in his pockets.'

'Who did, darling?' her mother said absent-mindedly, for she was busy.

'My father did.' Her head was bent so that her caramel-colored hair almost hid her face. A child so often bends its little head when it must say something important, as if it knew that earnestness sits so beautifully on a little face that the meaning may be obscured by the beauty.

For a moment the mother couldn't speak. 'You mean . . . you dreamed about him?'

'No. I remember,' Rose-Hélène said softly. 'He threw me up in the air and caught me. Then he put his hands in his pockets.'

The day came back then — that lost lovely day in the fall, with the three of them playing together in the courtyard of the château. Yes, it had been a cold morning — Robert *had* put his hands in his pockets, and he had stood there in the watery sunlight with his feet far apart, laughing down at his small, absurd daughter. She was so little then — nearly four years ago. The moment itself had been so trivial . . . Yet it wasn't trivial, for it had in it all the substance of what is lost now, the luxury and comfort, the being-together — and the safety. A baby *couldn't* have known what that moment meant, and yet she had kept it intact somewhere down in the privacy of her mind.

The memory is nearly all she has of him now, that tall, sensitive-faced aristocrat. Yet it is not all she has of him, by any means. She has his proud French courage, incongruous in her soft little-girl body. And she has a kind of destiny about her, as though the interrupted male thrust of the man waited for her life to complete it.

I saw a letter from him today, written from that black despair where he must pace up and down, waiting and waiting, and daily growing weaker and more befuddled

by hunger and torment. He said something like this: 'In all this filth and stagnation and mud, there is one white flower growing. It is our faith in two things: our faith in God, and our faith in America.'

Robert de Vigny told a wonderful thing about that German hell. There are thousands of French prisoners in it, and they have built an altar for themselves. One of France's best artists is shut up there; he has somehow managed to paint that altar so that it has some kind of heart-breaking beauty about it. The altar is made of boards, so that they can take it apart and hide it among themselves. When it is safe — in the night, probably — they put it together and pray before it.

It was one of these prayers, perhaps, that moved the mountain from before little Rose-Hélène, and put it safely behind her.

In the feudal village where the de Vigny have been landowners for centuries, there is a school where eighty little girls and two nuns begin every day with a prayer for Monsieur Robert, because it was he who gave them their school. When he and his regiment marched away from their beautiful little village, they knew he was going to fight for them; they understand all that, and they pray for him in the prison.

They know, too, that his wife, Madame, is an American, and that sometime she will be able to ask Americans to send soldiers and food. Soldiers they want, but food they must have, if there is going to be anything left of them to save when the soldiers come. But meantime, while they wait, they pray daily for Madame and for Rose-Hélène.

'Nothing could happen to us, surrounded with such prayers,' Margot de Vigny said to me. 'There hardly was a moment through all our terrible journey when I didn't feel those prayers around us.'

Soon after France fell, Madame de Vigny and her

child fled to Morocco, because being an American in occupied France was a dangerous circumstance, even though Germany was not yet at war with America.

German soldiers were everywhere, and a word of English was a red flag to those bulls. That is why Rose-Hélène speaks no English, except the almost-symbolic words she has learned since they arrived in America a few weeks ago.

'Thank you very much, Madame,' she says. It is her response to everything. She offers you her hand and makes a little curtsy which twists your heart in spite of yourself.

The first day she came to see me, she was a little too bright-eyed and quiet. She had an earache, her mother explained apologetically. But Rose-Hélène had no complaint of any kind. She never complains about anything; it is as if she *knew*. She sits on a chair quietly, with her ankles crossed like a child in an old French portrait, and her lovely eyes keep running back to her mother's face, as if it were a barometer telling the state of the world.

They had come to luncheon, but when I realized that the little girl was not well, I suggested that she have a nap in my bed, with her luncheon sent up from the dining-room. So she stayed alone in this strange bedroom, almost courteously unafraid. When she woke up and we asked her how much her ear was hurting, she showed us on her finger.

'Comme ça,' she said bravely, marking off about an inch. An hour later, we had got her to the doctor, and he had said she must be taken immediately to a hospital. The earache, he said, was an abscess in each ear, and one had already burst; her temperature was one hundred and three. But she had not complained, and she still had her manners with her when we said good-bye.

'Thank you very much, Madame,' she said, and gave

me her hot hand, and made her wobbly little curtsey before we could stop her.

She wasn't just a very well-bred little girl to me at that moment. She was all the best of France, which this world has somehow got to save. For all our sakes.

After I had seen that wobbly little curtsey, it wasn't difficult for me to picture her in Morocco. She had no toys, because there is no room in refugee luggage for dolls and teddy bears. But she had a pair of black patent-leather slippers, with fancy straps, and these she loved like toys. They slept under her bed, and talked to her when she was lonely. *Pierre et Pied*, she called them.

And she had friends, for she is a very merry child, and lots of frightened people needed cheering up, and the sight of a little girl in patent-leather slippers is one kind of currency that not even war can debase.

So she kept herself busy in Morocco, toys or no toys.

But one day she came into the house, and for the first time in her whole short life, she found her mother crying. Crying too much to stop and pretend to be doing something else. A letter had just come from Germany. Usually they were full of faith and hope, those letters. But this one was discouraged.

'The mind slides downhill into a swamp,' this letter said. 'And besides, four of my teeth have fallen out of my gums because of the hunger. Dear heart, even if I ever could come back to you, you would not love me, for there will be nothing left of me worth loving . . .'

Rose-Hélène couldn't know what the letter said, of course. But she knew that the world was suddenly terribly wrong, for Maman was crying, and that was worse than all the bombing she had seen.

She squatted on the floor where her mother lay weeping, and took her head on her own small shoulder. 'Why

are you crying, Maman?' she said. 'You must tell me, and I'll make it well again.'

Her mother couldn't pretend this day. So she gave up trying to.

'It is your father, darling,' she said. 'I'm so lonely without him.'

'But you have *me*,' the child said.

'Yes, I have you, my darling.' But the tears kept coming, and the wild sobs.

'He is coming back. You wait, Maman,' Rose-Hélène said.

'I am so afraid he is never coming back. He'll die in that terrible place. We'll never see him again.'

'No. He is coming back,' she said confidently. 'I know, Maman. I have arranged it.' The American girl lay on the floor and wept. All the brave barriers of confidence and cheerfulness were down.

The baby went on talking, stroking her mother's hair: 'He is coming back soon. You wait.'

'Oh, no.'

'I have spoken to the soldiers about him. Whenever they speak to me on the street, I ask them where is my father. I say, "Will you please bring my father back, Monsieur?"' she said with dignity.

'Oh, my darling . . .'

'And now' — she whispered it in her earnestness — 'he is coming back. It is all arranged.'

The American girl sat up. She took her child's face tremblingly between her hands.

'What makes you say that?'

The child smiled then. 'The Germans have promised me,' she said.

Later, when that day was almost over, and Margot still lay on the floor, exhausted by the wild weeping, Rose-Hélène came tiptoeing into the room again. She knelt

on the floor beside her mother's head, and leaned over to look into her eyes.

They were not the eyes of a woman and a little child looking at each other then. They were the wide, ancient eyes of the courage of the world, impersonal and yet tender, too big to belong to anybody, old or young, unkillable as light across the earth.

'What is it?' Margot said.

The child knelt there a long time, and then she said, not in baby language, but in beautifully phrased French such as she had never used before, nor has ever risen to since:

'You must not despair. You must have courage. The kind of courage I have.'

The American girl says that she knew that it was not her child speaking. It was something much more than that. She recognized it as God, using the voice which was near at hand, and saying words which needed to be said to hearten her for all time.

She got up then, and she has never wept again. She has never turned back in the luxury of grief to those old lost beautiful days of ease with her husband. Her face now looks straight on, and every move she makes and every thought she has is toward the winning of the war. You know that when you see her, still wearing that thin little suit in which she walked across the Pyrenees. . . .

So they went back to France then, after the child had said the Word. They stayed in France as long as they dared.

At the time I talked to them, they were the only Americans to escape from France after Hitler's complete occupation. After the Americans came into Africa, when Hitler abandoned his cruel pretense that any of France was free, Madame de Vigny realized that the country was unsafe for her and her child, and it seemed

to her that she must leave and try to help France from without its paralyzed borders.

'I love France not as you love a friend with whom you have enjoyed only happy days, but as you love one at whose deathbed you have sat. I could not bear to leave, and I waited as long as I dared.'

But finally it became evident that if she were to serve at all, she must go. So early in December she took her little girl and fled toward Spain hoping to go on to England. On the train a police official warned her that when she reached the border she would be picked up by the German police, and put into prison. He begged her to let him stop the train and put her off, so finally she and her child got off in the middle of the night at a lonely little railway station some miles from the frontier.

She sat in the station praying, with her little girl in her arms. When morning came and the railway station opened, she bought one and a half fares back to Lourdes. In that beloved spot were such remnants of the local government as still existed. It meant defeat to her, for she knew that nowhere in France at that moment was an American free or safe to work at the only work which matters.

She prayed for God to tell her what to do. She lifted up her eyes, she says, and across the sky stretched the hazy, misty wall of the Pyrenees, impassable and forbidding. Beyond them lay England and America, and all that men call freedom in this world.

Suddenly she remembered the Word which had been spoken to her through her child that day in Morocco, and a surge of courage and strength seemed to flow into her. A moment before she had been baffled and defeated, but now she felt strong and unafraid. She knew that somehow she and Rose-Hélène would get across

those mountains so that they could help fight for France.

She got up resolutely and took her child by the hand, leaving her pile of luggage in the railway station. They went up through the sleepy village to the inn.

'I want to walk across the mountains,' she said in a whisper to an old man who was sweeping the piazza.

'Madame, you are mad. It is quite impossible,' he said, not stopping his sweeping nor lifting his head.

'I must get out. I have work to do for France,' she said. 'If you can tell me the best place to start toward . . .'

'It is too cold, Madame, and the child'

'Never mind the child,' she said. 'She can do anything she needs to do.'

He went on sweeping, and she went on talking.

'American?' he asked, barely moving his lips. But his eyes kindled suddenly, as if some small candle of hope had been lighted. 'You go inside and see if they can give you any breakfast, Madame. We shall see.'

Nothing seemed to be happening in the inn. But gradually whispers were fitting together, and it was all arranged. If Madame would walk straight up the mountain from now until seven o'clock this evening, she would come across a little shelter. There were seven Jewish refugees who were gathering in that shelter. There they were going to be joined by a man from the village who knew the mountain pass — seven thousand five hundred feet above. After nightfall, when it would be safe for him to leave the village, he was going to the shelter, and they would try to start the perilous trip.

'Perhaps Madame had better leave the child.'

'The child is my strength,' Margot said. 'I could not take a step without her.'

They shrugged their shoulders. Madame was either

insane or inspired. But perhaps it doesn't matter too much how one dies. . . .

Rose-Hélène had on her black patent-leather shoes, Pierre et Pied, and cotton socks which shivered around her little ankles when the wind blew. Her coat was too short for her, because she had had to wear it since she was a baby. Her little legs looked cold and thin between the outgrown coat and the shivering cotton socks.

Maybe somebody in the village would have given her something warmer, but they dared not risk asking — they dared not risk being noticed in the village. They left the luggage at the inn; luggage doesn't matter. (Luggage doesn't matter anywhere on this earth today, except in America. These mature people who have escaped to our shores are very gentle about forgiving us our obsolete concern for our belongings. It is as though we were children with our toys — our evening dresses, our make-believe hardships, our rationing and sacrificing — all toys. I marvel sometimes at the patience of these people who have escaped.)

Well, they started across the meadow. The wind rushed along with them, a rowdy companion. Maman knelt down and took off the tie from her blouse and tied it over Rose-Hélène's hat to keep her ears warmer. The little girl smiled up at her and chattered. It was a picnic; they were going somewhere, weren't they?

'We are going somewhere again, darling,' Margot said. They have been 'going somewhere' over and over homelessly for the past three years — by plane, by peasant's cart, on foot . . .

Only a few hundred feet up the mountain-side, they met the snow, and the wind was sharper. The little patent-leather shoes got soaked in no time, and the cotton socks. Maman knelt down again and took off her scarf. The patent-leather shoes came off, and the scarf was wrapped around the almost numb little feet.

'We'll go piggy-back,' she said. 'We'll carry Pierre et Pied.' They buckled the little shoes together and fastened them into a buttonhole of the outgrown coat.

All day they staggered up the mountain-side, and there was no sign of anyone alive — only the wind and the deepened snow. But God had started them on this journey, and the prayers of the eighty children and the two nuns in the stricken French village, and of the man in the prison mud, were all around them, bearing them up in their hands like the angels in the Psalm.

'It wasn't a physical journey,' Madame de Vigny said to me. 'It was a spiritual experience. Terrible and yet wonderful.'

In the twilight, huddles of rocks looked like the shelter. Margot and the child tottered off their course and lost their way time after time in the cruel prankishness of the shadows. They began to fear they had missed the meeting place. The refugees would go on without them, because of course they were strangers, and did not expect a woman and a child to join them.

There was no real path, and Margot couldn't be sure she had gone straight. She was almost too tired to talk, but they talked anyway, to keep up each other's spirits. Neither of them mentioned being hungry, but they dared eat only a little of the chocolate they had with them.

'We knew we could not die, because God had brought us,' Madame de Vigny says.

At last they came to the shelter, and the seven crouched figures waiting bleakly for the guide, who had been delayed. Except for the delay, they might have gone on without Rose-Hélène and her mother. They slept a few hours in the wind-tortured shelter, and at five o'clock in the morning they started out again.

By now it was very cold, the December blast tore down the mountain, but they bent their heads and

went on, not talking much, except to the child. They were people full of despair, for the Jews had nowhere to go. Only the child knew no despair.

It took them four endless days and nights to trudge over that pass. Rose-Hélène's little feet were so nearly frozen that they had to be rubbed with snow. But she neither whimpered nor cried. Far from being a burden to the half-frozen little band, she was what kept them going.

They were not young people; they had been hungry and cold for months. Their hearts had been broken by loss and their bodies broken by torture. But the child was something new to think about, a kind of passport into a future.

Sometimes they broke down, in spite of themselves. 'I cannot go on,' one would say, slumping down in the snow. 'You leave me here. I'm an old man anyway . . . just go on without me.'

But the others would stand over him, haggard-faced and weary, so tired themselves that they had no ounce of encouragement to spare.

'It's your turn to carry the child,' they would say to him. 'Carry your share, and then you can give up.' So the old man or the heartsick woman would struggle up again and lift the little girl in aching arms, and stagger along awhile. They would fall behind the others, the weakest one and the child, and the others would go on, knowing what was happening.

Then they would hear them laughing, the refugee and the child, or singing a husky breathless scrap — and soon they would all be together again, for strength had come back.

The weakest always did the carrying, so that he could become strong again. And when the next one faltered and sank down, they gave him the baby, and he carried

her until he, too, was himself again — and more than himself.

When they finally got down from the mountains on the Spanish side, they were completely lost; half-starved, half-frozen, but full of gratitude to God. They straggled along for two more days before they reached a railway that would take them on to Madrid.

In Madrid there was kindness waiting. Rose-Hélène and her mother were taken to the American Embassy, where Mrs. Hayes, the wife of our Ambassador to Spain, cared for them as if they were her own children.

The little girl, I have no doubt, said, 'Thank you very much, Madame,' to Mrs. Hayes, and made a wobbly curtsy.

Mrs. Hayes said: 'We must have a doctor examine this child. She must be put to bed . . .'

'But she is fine,' Margot said. 'We mustn't be a bother to you.'

'Nevertheless I insist upon the doctor.'

So the doctor came, and Madame de Vigny, in her well-bred courteous way, did not mention to him that they had just undergone a terrific ordeal.

He examined the child thoroughly. She seemed in excellent condition, except that she had a little 'sniffle.'

'Tell me, Madame,' he said casually, 'do you know whether this child has been in a draft recently?'

* * *

You cannot be in the room with these two, this child of America and this child of France, without knowing you are in the presence of something wonderful. Not just a brave mother and a child of courage, but a meaning of France and a meaning of America, a standing on tiptoe and reaching up to a future.

'Of course we believe,' the American girl says. 'We

more than believe. We *know*. Because good is more powerful than evil.'

She says that, this gently reared American who has had and lost many good things of this world — a picturesque romance, a beloved husband, a fabulous fortune, and security for her child.

'Good is more powerful than evil,' she says.

And her child says, replying to what she knows of America, 'Thank you very much, Madame.' And when she smiles and gives even a stranger her little hand and curtsies, she is not a well-bred child; she is France itself, all we love and must save. For all our sakes.

The Private Dunkirk

HIS E'S A MAN who survived a shipwreck,' Mr. MacPherson said before I saw him.

'Oh, a seaman?'

'Well, he's a seaman at the moment,' Fairst said. 'But this shipwreck happened on dry land. Well, not on dry land, exactly.' He lit his pipe thoughtfully and pulled on it, and he said not a word more until the red eye in the bowl had winked at me twice. 'This shipwreck happened, you might say, inside of himself. What country do you call that — the geography inside a man?'

'Many names for that country,' I said. 'None of them very good. Too old-fashioned or too new-fangled, depending on whether you say "souls" or "psychology."'

'Exactly,' Mr. MacPherson said comfortably. Then he began telling me something about his friend who had survived the shipwreck.

'He's forty-three — two years in the last war, when he was just a youngster. His family are landed people in northeast Lancashire — they've lived in the same house since 1096. He's done some writing and painting — he was an amateur boxer — came over here with the Olympic teams in 1932 . . .'

'How about this war?'

'The Army wouldn't have him — some kind of heart'

— Mr. MacPherson chuckled at that ancient joke of the Merchant Marine. 'So he signed up with the British Merchant Navy. Nice restful place for heart trouble.'

'When was the shipwreck?' I asked.

'I don't know just when that happened,' Fairst said. 'It might have been sometime during the first war — or maybe it was when his wife died, leaving him with a little boy — or maybe it was last September when — no, I think that was when he climbed on the raft I was telling you about.'

'The raft?' I tried to remember his mentioning a raft in this dry-land shipwreck.

'Sairtainly. The raft that finally rescued him — inside himself, you know.'

'Oh, yes,' I said, not being very clear about it.

But even with all this explanation, when Frederick Foulds-Smith came to see me in my New York apartment, I was unprepared for the sight of him. He was a tall handsome scarecrow of a Britisher, with an actor's voice and a scholar's vocabulary. He arrived in the midst of the morning I had Dunkirk spread around me in clippings and notes and letters. The typewriter had one brave yellow sheet flying from the mast, and I had written as title in the middle of the page Winston Churchill's wonderful words:

'The Miracle of Deliverance.'

We talked a few minutes, taking each other's measure not too obviously, and then I surprised myself by saying: 'I'm writing about Dunkirk. This is the first page.'

He leaned forward a little, hunching those shoulders which looked more accustomed to bending over books than over ship's instruments. He read aloud what I had written, and his deep voice made it sound much better than it is.

'This is the chapter that should be written in Bible'

language. Some day, I have no doubt, it will be so written, for the race will look back on Dunkirk as it looks back on the Red Sea. That horde of tortured men who escaped will be remembered when people are in dire need, as the children of Israel are remembered.

'Like the Red Sea, Dunkirk will be both adored and disbelieved. It will be explained away by scientific fact, as the skeptics have explained away all miracles in the sufficiently past tense.

'But it cannot be discredited yet, because too many people lived through it. Too many letters tell about it, and too many columns of words. But not one millionth of it has been told, nor ever will be.

'It happened quickly, rolling up like a nightmare, breaking over us in delirium. It was only after it receded, almost as quickly as it had come, that we began to understand it — no, for still we do not understand. But at least we *saw* what had happened.

'It began with prayer on the twenty-sixth of May; it ended with a Thanksgiving on the ninth of June . . . ' He looked up and his dark eyes were somber yet excited.

'You see, no word had leaked out of the full extremity that was threatening three hundred and fifty thousand men stranded on the Continent,' he said. 'But people knew in their hearts this was rock bottom. And of course the men at the top were beside themselves.

'They knew human effort alone wasn't going to be enough. So they asked the whole nation to pray.'

'Everybody joined in, didn't they?'

'Every church and mission hall was filled. People prayed in the streets. Even in hospitals — I suppose children were praying — and of course at Westminster Abbey, the King and Queen, and the good Wilhelmina. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Churchill and the Cabinet — they all knelt.'

I picked up from among my clippings one from the *London Daily Telegraph* which said: 'Officers of high rank do not hesitate to put down the deliverance of the B.E.F. to the fact of the nation being at prayer. The consciousness of miraculous deliverance pervades the camps in which the troops are now housed.'

He nodded. 'Yes. Even the people who say they don't believe in God believed in Dunkirk.'

'Like Mr. MacPherson?' I asked. Our eyes met and he smiled.

'Just like Mr. MacPherson,' he said, and I knew we understood each other, because we both understood Fairst.

We went on talking about those terrible days on the Continent when a tragedy was drawing to its climax.

'They had been seventeen days without much sleep,' he said. 'Pushing back, trying to get a toe in. Then King Leopold of Belgium surrendered, and they knew it was hopeless.'

'Of course, the Germans had clogged the roads with refugees, a wall of frightened people to keep the British and French armies from getting through to the coast.'

'It must have been difficult for them to destroy their equipment, knowing that they didn't have too much of it left in England to continue the war.'

'My nephew said he banged twenty motors to pieces, sobbing and cursing while he did it. And all the time the German planes were blotting out the sun . . . Jim says he'd never seen so many planes together in his life — nearly split his eardrums, the noise. Bombs were coming down all around them, and the ground was bursting into volcanoes and little earthquakes. . . . But there was one strange thing.' He looked at me, making up his mind whether or not to say it. Then he went on.

'I've heard many chaps who were there speak of it.'

'What was that?'

'Ghastly as everything was, there was a strange, unearthly feeling that something wonderful was happening. As if they were safer than they had any right to feel.'

I picked up a clipping from a London newspaper and read out that a man had told C. B. Morlock, 'I lay with four hundred men who were machine-gunned systematically, up and down, and bombed by sixty enemy aircraft, and in the end, there was not a single casualty.'

He walked over to my apartment window and looked down into the street a long minute; then he turned around and said: 'I can tell you something you'll hardly believe. Except that a chaplain told it to me. This padre was lying on the ground being machine-gunned and bombed for what seemed like hours to him. I suppose he was praying. . . . Well, suddenly he realized that in spite of the deafening noise and the pelting bullets all around, he hadn't been hit at all.

'So he got up then. Carefully, I imagine. The bullets were still pouring down. But when he looked at the ground he says he saw something he couldn't believe.'

'What was it?'

'He saw his own shape lying on the ground.'

'His own shape?'

'A silhouette — a kind of shadow of himself — an outline of his body. Inside the outline, where his body had been, the ground was untouched. But all around the place where he'd lain, the earth looked as if it had been spaded up by a gardener.'

When they finally got to Dunkirk, the town was a bedlam. The Main Basin was full of ships that had been sunk, and it didn't look as if any of the British Admiralty could get in to pick up the men. They crawled into cellars, civilians and soldiers alike, and ate whatever they could find.

'One of my friends said all he had was *pâté de foie*

gras, hard candy, and champagne, which had been stored in the basement under a shop that had been blown to bits,' Mr. Foulds-Smith said.

Finally the troops began going up north of the city to the beaches, and there they formed lines to be in some kind of order whenever evacuation could commence.

'I'll never forget the way those black ranks of men looked as we came into the harbor.'

'You were there?'

'Of course,' he said. 'Everybody was there who could handle a boat.' He went right on, lifting my interest from himself and placing it back on those formations on the beaches. 'They stood there, hour after hour, while the sea was too rough for us to take in the little boats. Some had been smashed up trying to land — there weren't any proper docks left, you know. Well, still in formation, the men waded out a half-mile into the water, neck deep.

'When you saw them from out in the water, they looked like some kind of landmark. I often think of them, standing there day and night like some kind of landmark . . . I don't know.' He covered his eyes with his hand, and I could see this was very moving to him.

'They *were* a sort of landmark, in a newly discovered country . . . ' I had a quick vision of that 'country of a man's life — that geography inside himself' for which Mr. MacPherson was trying to find a word.

Foulds-Smith went on in a minute, after he had accepted my words. 'Another funny thing — when we finally began taking them on board — when the sea got calm enough — all kinds of little French and Belgian dogs began scrambling on with the men.'

'Dogs? Where had they come from?'

'They had run along beside our troops for miles. The most touching sight. It was almost as if they knew that

the Continent was no fit place for anything so decent as a dog to stay on. They swam right out in the water with the men. A lot of them got back to England, and the troops insisted on paying their quarantine fees. I think it was a kind of symbol to some of the men — sentimental, maybe?’ He smiled ruefully, as a Briton does if he’s accusing anybody of sentiment.

‘You know, the water was covered with a thick scum of oil from the petrol tanks. The din was maddening, and the heat — well, the heat from the burning tanks simply blistered our bodies. It was hell,’ he said quietly, ‘complete hell. Except for that feeling we had.

‘All kinds of strange things happened to people that week. Men who hadn’t seen each other since school ran into each other, and they didn’t even think it was odd, the way you’re not surprised when you meet strange people in nightmares.’

‘Yes, I know what you mean,’ I said, and I found a place in a book called *Heroes All* by Collie Knox. It was a story about twin brothers who had been lost from each other for nearly two years. Suddenly in the midst of that rain of bullets, each flung himself down on the sand, and stretching out their hands as they dropped, they touched each other.

‘“They spoke no word, but lay there holding hands as they had when they were children,” ’ I read, and then, remembering that Foulds-Smith was British, I quickly explained, ‘You see, they were only youngsters — nineteen, I think . . .’

‘Nineteen? That’s Jack’s age,’ he said, and as he said it his whole face came to life, so that the wrinkles, the deep gash of sorrow at the side of his mouth, seemed to lift, and his very skin smiled. He took out a picture and showed it to me, a faded picture of a tall lad on a horse.

‘My son,’ he said proudly. ‘That’s Jack. It’s a fine

horse, too,' he said. 'Minor we called him, for some crazy reason of Jack's. I forget why, just now.' Then as if to apologize for having the picture: 'I've been father and mother both to him since he was five. I taught him to ride, and to box and to shoot . . .'

I wanted to ask some more about his boy of whom he was obviously so proud. But I could see that he didn't know me well enough yet to boast. So we went back to Dunkirk.

'One providential factor nobody has stressed much,' he said in a businesslike way, 'was the beaches. You see, nobody picked those for the waiting place; they were simply all that offered. But actually the beaches were the safest possible place to be during the kind of strafing and bombing our men had to take.

'Bombs simply buried themselves in the sand, and except for direct hits, there wasn't the danger of flying splinters which usually cause the big percentage of casualties. One little Cockney I brought back in my boat said: "If I've got to be bombed, give me a ruddy beach every time. No flying glass, no falling chimneys, and no gas mains to catch fire." He had a point.'

Then he told me about the five-foot-wide piers the engineers built across old breakwaters. Nearly a quarter of a million men walked across those and got into the boats, the able carrying the wounded, the lamed limping and lurching, but keeping themselves going somehow.

'That was a sight you'd never forget,' he said. 'If you'd never loved the race before, you'd have loved it then.' He looked earnestly into my face as he said that. 'Why can't we learn that without all the grief?' he cried with sudden passion.

'You see, I went all through the last war. I wasn't wounded, but I came back with a wounded point of view. I was eighteen, and I was sick of the world.

'Then a lot of things happened to me. I went to Manchester University. I married. I didn't want to be serious about anything — I'd seen all I could bear of suffering, and I just wanted to play and be happy. I rode and swam and did everything I could to keep away from my sick mind — I just lived in my well body.

'Then some more things happened to me — and finally I had a son.' He was afraid to meet my eye, but he couldn't stop now that he had started. 'I can't explain it. But up to then I hadn't cared what became of things. I was angry at the world. But then I saw that I had to do something to make things different for my son. I said to myself, "Listen, you chap — you've been wrong, and things have hit you because you didn't think properly — you've got to find out how things really are — you've got to bring up this boy so he'll know how to make sense out of things . . ."'

He got up then and went back to the window and looked down into the street so I couldn't see his face. 'I told you I'd been father and mother to him. Well, I was. Mary died when he was five. I lived for him. We did everything together — went to games — and museums — read books — had a boat together. But all the time I was trying to find out what was the *one* thing I ought to teach him. The thing I'd never had . . .

'He was a wonderful little chap — I don't say it because I'm his father. He *was* wonderful.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I'm sure he was.'

He came back then and sat down and picked up the clippings. And in a moment he went on as if there had been no personal parenthesis.

'Let me see,' he said. 'I was going to tell you about the boats, wasn't I?' I wanted him to tell me about his son, but he began telling about those crazy wonderful little boats which made up that epic armada which the world has come to love. 'One man couldn't tell it all,'

he said. 'Not even a Homer. You know what I had? A houseboat! A big waddling gawky houseboat, never made for going any place except from one mooring to another along the Thames.

'Jack telephoned from the University, "Dad, I'm coming out with you." He was only seventeen then — he was taking premedical work. "You've got to let me come out with you," he said.

"You stay there and do your own job," I said to him. "England's going to need doctors." Foulds-Smith forgot what he was going to tell me, and I reminded him about his houseboat.

'Oh, yes . . . Well, when I went to volunteer that night they said, "Any of you chaps think you could get a houseboat engine to running that hasn't been used for a while?" So I took it on, with two other chaps who also had had boats of their own. We worked on it almost all night, and we got it running at five o'clock in the morning.

'We got it out of the Thames — she'd never been out in the Channel of course — she'd never been anywhere. Took us twenty-eight hours to make the forty miles.

'Took us even longer to get back — thirty-two hours, I think — because we were so overloaded with men that our deck was under water. Mostly, we had wounded aboard, and I wished I had had Jack with me — even a youngster like Jack could have helped bandage up some of those men . . .'

Suddenly I saw he had slipped into some area of memory too painful, so I picked up *Yachting Magazine* (August, 1940), which has a story told by T. Norman Hinton. I pointed it out, and he took the magazine gratefully. But his hands were trembling.

Mr. Hinton says he was assigned to take out the *Curlew*, a little yacht which had been laid up for a couple of years. He was supposed to follow a larger

ship, the *Cairngorm*. They got across the Channel, and were within sight of Dunkirk when the following incident occurred.

Foulds-Smith was reading aloud now, and his voice steadied as he read.

“I shall always aver it was by the intervention of Providence. The engineer on the *Curlew* reported it was absolutely imperative that I should ease the engines for a spell. Desperately he told me, ‘A valve is sticking — everything’s hot.’

“I eased her down promptly to twelve hundred revs, and simultaneously for a reason then unknown to me, the *Cairngorm* used her last fractional knot to jump ahead of us.

“And in that moment a bomb fell between us. Had we not slowed down, we would certainly have been hit; so would the *Cairngorm* if she had not speeded up.”

The bomb came so close that it threw up a mountain of water directly in front of the little yacht, which shot upward, and then, at the top of the mound of water, she took a terrific nose dive. But she seemed held steadily, almost by unseen hands for she didn’t capsize.

The Prime Minister had warned the nation to expect to save only twenty thousand or thirty thousand men. He had said, ‘The whole root and core and brain of the British Army upon which we were to build . . . seemed about to perish or be led into ignominious captivity.’ And yet, by this ‘miracle’ three hundred and thirty-five thousand men had been ‘brought out of the very jaws of death.’

‘You never saw such looking men,’ Foulds-Smith said to me. ‘A noble, tragic tatterdemalion horde that had limped and crawled and swum the distance between utter defeat and — well, something else. I don’t know what you’d call it. Not victory, but something — maybe

something just as important. Not just as good, but just as important . . .

'All the trains in England were massed for the moving. The French gave a fine account of themselves. Hungry as we all were, they wouldn't eat a bite until they saw there was enough for the British first. The railway stations were jammed — women making sandwiches until their fingers were too stiff to hold knives — people crying with joy when they found each other. At one station a bridal party brought down its wedding cake and passed up slices to the men in the trains. They ate it like bread, hardly tasting it. Nobody cared that it was wedding cake. Nobody cared about anything, except that the men were back.'

He was quiet a few minutes, and I frankly didn't try to conceal that those were tears on my own face. Then he picked up some of the newspaper clippings I have collected, and he noticed the words I had underlined, 'Miraculous' and 'Superhuman' and 'Providential.'

'Yes,' he said, 'those are the words for it.' He read aloud what John Masefield, poet laureate of England, said: "'Hope and Help are stronger things than death. Hope and Help came together in their power into the minds of thousands of simple men, and plucked them from ruin.'" He looked at me thoughtfully, not seeing me at all. "'Hope and Help are stronger than death,'" he repeated. 'Yes, I think that is so.'

'I'll tell you something about those simple men,' he said. 'When they got back to safety, they wanted to say some prayers. We said them on our houseboat. We said them out loud, and lots of us had never prayed out loud in our lives before.'

'After a few days, the public wanted to give them something else to think about — some entertainment. In one camp I knew, they got up an E.N.S.A. concert. In the midst of it some of the men stood up and asked if

they couldn't have a bit of prayer. Since that night, every E.N.S.A. concert in that camp has had a short prayer service included.'

He was still running through my clippings, reading a paragraph here and there. ' "One thing can be certain about tomorrow's Thanksgiving in our churches. From no one will the thanks ascend with greater sincerity or deeper fervor than from the officers and men who have seen the hand of God powerful to save, delivering them from the hands of a mighty foe, who, humanly speaking, had them utterly at his mercy," ' he read.

Suddenly then he began talking about himself. 'Every fortnight or so, I'd go down and try to enlist in some kind of service. But still it was no go. When the Blitzes began I went into the A.R.P. I worked all through Sheffield, and Hull, and Liverpool . . .

'And meantime I was having trouble with Jack. For the first time in my life.'

'What kind of trouble?'

'Well, you see, he was still only seventeen — but he wanted to sign up. He knew how to fly — and besides' — he could barely get these words out, so painful were they — 'you know how a youngster is. And he thought — well, after all, I'd been a bit of an athlete. I feel strong as a horse — I was too vain to tell him right out that they wouldn't take me.

'So one week-end Jack said he wasn't coming home any more. "I'm fed up with things," he said. Finally he blurted it out. He was ashamed of me — everybody's dad was enlisted in something. . . . It hurt me so much that I couldn't tell him. I just lost my temper.

'But the next day I went and signed up with the Merchant Navy. But it didn't change things between us. "Our family's got a man in the war now, so you go back to your school work," I said, but he said, "Yes, but we ought to have a flyer."

'I shipped out then, and stewed about it. I was hurt, but mostly I was scared to death that something would happen to my boy, that the war would get him the way the other one had got me when I was his age. I did a beastly amount of thinking on that trip. Seems to me I must have thought back over every day of his life. All the mistakes I'd made, and all the good times we'd had together — things he had said, good, square-shooting boy kind of things . . .

'And suddenly I thought, "Well, what kind of man *is* it you're trying to make out of him? Certainly he wants to fight — you can't stop him."'

Foulds-Smith's face now had light written on it, in every weary wrinkle. 'I could hardly wait to get back. It was a long hard trip — but I was happy. I kept thinking and thinking about how I'd go down to the University and get him — no, I'd telephone him the minute we docked, and we'd have a few days at Barnsley together and then I'd go with him when he signed up. And maybe — well, a chap like me never gives up hope. Maybe they'd let me enlist in something, too.

'We got back on the thirtieth of September, and as soon as I could, I sent him a wire and one to the Dean asking them to let him come home. Then I jumped on a train for home.

'I thought maybe he'd be at the station to meet me, but he wasn't. I walked up through the village, and on out to our place. I noticed the tenants stepped back into their cottages as soon as I had spoken to them — but I didn't want any chatting either . . .

'When I got home, the servants were on the steps. We had only two maids now, and old Anderson and his wife. "Come in, Mr. Frederick — there's mail for you," they said.

'"Jack hasn't come yet?" I asked, but I could see he hadn't. I went into my own study, and there on my

desk were letters — a few magazines and some appeals — and there was a letter with Jack's writing on the envelope.'

His voice was so low now that I could barely hear it. 'But I read the wire first,' he said. 'He had made just two trips out with the bombers — it happened on his third trip over.

'I couldn't read his letter. I didn't read it for nearly three months. I was afraid of it. . . . You see, when he had written it, he hadn't known it was going to be so important — all there was — all there ever was going to be . . .

'Well, I didn't unpack my bag. I couldn't stay in the house. I went down to one of the farms and slept with a family — the happiest people I've ever known, farm people with six children. They hadn't heard about Jack and I didn't tell them.

'Next day, I made arrangements for the village to have the house — make a school of it, or a hospital, or whatever they wanted. I went back down to Cardiff and signed on the first ship I could get. I didn't even ask where it was going.

'I just dug down into myself as deep as I could go. It didn't matter to me what anybody thought. I just didn't have anything I wanted to say.

'Then one night we were off Freetown, the nastiest-smelling port on the coast of Africa, and I was drunk. There was a pinch-faced little engineer on our ship, and he came down to my quarters and without a word he smashed me on the jaw.

'“What's that for?” I said.

'“I don't know what's the matter with you,” he said, “but you haven't any right to behave the way you do. You're an educated man — and if you know anything, you owe it to the rest of the blokes to act like something.”

"Get out of here," I said. "I'll act any way I blankety-blank please."

"You can act it tomorrow, but not tonight," the engineer said. "Because — you know what night tonight is?"

"No, and I don't care," I said.

"Well, it's Christmas Eve, and you've got to act like somebody decent on Christmas. Drinking down here by yourself! If you want to drink, come up and drink with me."

He had such a pinched-up little Irish face, and it was so full of goodness and — well, it just sobered me. His face, and the smash he had given my face!

"I'm through drinking tonight," I said. "But I'll come up with you, and we'll talk." "Christmas," I said to myself, "and you didn't even know it!" I went into my bathroom then, and took a shower and shaved, and put on clean clothes.

"And where do you think you're going?" the engineer said.

"Back," I said, and he knew what I meant.

We started up on deck then, the two of us, and suddenly I wanted Jack's letter. "You go along," I said. "I'll be up in a minute." I went back to my quarters, and opened the letter.

I'm not going to try to tell you what it said. It wouldn't mean much to you. But it said something that nearly knocked me over. It said something about God. We had never talked about God, my boy and I. But this letter said something — not very rhetorical — just what a boy would say — but suddenly I saw it was *that* I had been trying to give him all the time — that I'd never rightly had myself.

I went up on deck, and the engineer was leaning with his elbows on the rail, looking out at that water

and that sky. "Pretty, hmm?" he said. "It makes a bloke think."

'I stood there, looking at him and the stars and the ocean . . . and suddenly I was free of all the anger and the meanness that had been in me. The self-pity, I guess it was, because I had wanted to make a good world for my son, and I hadn't been able to manage it.

'I don't know how to tell you, but suddenly, knowing the kind of father I had wanted to be for Jack — I knew what God is. I *knew* Him. He was everything, the Irishman by the rail, who had cared enough to smash my face — myself — the people on that farm. . . . Everything He had made was a part of Himself, just the way the things you think are a part of yourself. He was Good, and He wanted only good for me, just the way I wanted only good for *my* son.

'I'm not saying it well,' he said earnestly. 'It's something I don't know how to say. But anyway . . . I got a Bible, then, the next day or so, and I began trying to find out all about Him. I tried to find out about Him from myself, too. The things that are good in myself must have come from Him — must be like Him.'

So that was the shipwreck that Fairst had wanted me to hear about. And that was the raft — down *inside* the man himself — which finally saved him.

'I wanted to go back to England then,' Foulds-Smith said. 'But of course I had to finish the trip. It's been a long run — that's how I got over here.'

'And where are you going from here?'

Then his face lit up again in that sudden way it does. 'Oh, that's the good work ahead,' he said. 'I don't need the sea any more. I've got work to do in England now.'

'What kind of work?'

'Well — there'll be a lot of fatherless children in England now — and I'm a father without a child. Maybe

it'll be teaching, or having a farm full of youngsters — I don't know yet.'

He began picking up the clippings and putting them back tidily into their folder.

'Dunkirk — it's a wonderful pattern for all of us,' he said. 'We've all had private Dunkirks to face, and shall have again. But when we get to the utter seacoast and the final defeat, if we only trust God the way we all trusted at Dunkirk. . . .' He frowned then, trying to remember something. 'John Flavel said back in the seventeenth century, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."'

A Friend of a Friend of His —

LOUIE hugged her when they said good-bye in the hospital at Bridgetown, Barbados, and last night I saw him hug her again. They hadn't seen each other in the five months between. Louie looked to me like the last man on earth you'd suspect of hugging a missionary.

He came down to the Gospel Tabernacle just off Broadway to do his hugging. Louie doesn't go to religious meetings, and it was a terrible strain on him. He knew it would be. That's why he had had a few quick ones before he came to the meeting. Louie is a man of few words, and those few are helped out by well-oiled profanity, and eye-rolling and shoulder-shrugging.

He says he's got plenty of reason to hug a missionary, by God. 'She savea my life, by God,' Louie says, and he knocks the tears out of his eye with a big seaman's fist. Mrs. Bell, gentle little Ethel Bell, who doesn't look like a missionary so much as she looks like a slightly tired schoolteacher, admits that what Louie says is true. But she takes the comma out of his sentence. For whatever Ethel Bell does, from 'just loving an airplane' to saying a private inconspicuous grace in a public restaurant, she does by God.

It's hard to realize, if you're not accustomed to spend-

ing your time among people whose profession is religion, that there are women, young pretty women, who find God as near them as they find their own families, who consider Him every moment as they would consider the wishes and the advice of a beloved husband. I have no doubt such people don't mention God to strangers, any more than they would mention any other intimacy of their lives. But when you ask in the spirit in which I have been asking, your eyes are opened to it. It is a surprising, almost unbelievable sight.

The newspapers told the story mainly because there were children on the raft which had been drifting for twenty days. But they told only a few paragraphs of it. The newspapers said, 'The four children joined in the daily prayers.' That was why I searched out Ethel Bell.

She is a widow. Her husband died some years ago, when they had come home to America on a visit. She took her small children back to Africa to continue his work there, and in the summer of 1942, she started back again to the United States on a 'furlough.'

It was a medium-sized American ship. It lay at the end of more than a month of halting travel across Africa, and when the Bells and the Shaws saw it lying in the little harbor of Takoradi, off the Ivory Coast, it seemed to them like America itself. They were all homesick — the children were homesick for the African mission they had left at Bouake, and the grown-ups were homesick for the United States, which lay, by uncertain promise and ordeal and yearning, ahead.

They thought that when they reached the ship their troubles would be over. They had so long been out of touch with the news of the world that they didn't understand that war now lies under the sea like a monstrous tentacled octopus. War to them was only a blocked road and a denied visa, and the Vichy gov-

ernment and the British government barely speaking to each other in Africa.

The ship looked wonderfully safe, and little Mary Bell, who was thirteen, thought hungrily that since it was an American ship, they might possibly have some cream puffs aboard her. America to Mary had focused down to cream puffs, which were about all she could remember of her last visit — big wonderful cream puffs. Her mother had said that she wouldn't be a bit surprised if Mary had cream puffs for her birthday. 'I can practically promise them to you,' her mother said. 'We'll be home by the nineteenth of September.' So all the time the British government and the Vichy government were bickering about the visas, Mary was dreaming about cream puffs.

'All I want of them?' she sometimes asked out of a clear sky, as they were dragging along from one boundary line to another.

'All you can eat,' her mother said, not even needing to ask what they were talking about.

It was a little ship when they got aboard her, and they were lucky to have corned beef and ship's biscuits. Mary didn't like to mention the cream puffs; after all, the cook, a nice big Dutchman, was doing the best he could with what he had.

It was a peaceful trip home; there were only nine passengers on the cargo ship — two missionary families and one other person. The children — Mary and Robert Bell and the Shaw children — enjoyed the boat drills. They had never seen any news reels of war. . . . It was still fun; it was exciting.

This was Sunday and they were almost into Trinidad. They would dock on Tuesday, the Captain said. And if Mary was good . . .

It was a sleepy warm Sunday. The grown-ups were taking naps, the children were sitting in the shade of a

coil of rope playing guessing games. Little Carol Shaw, who was only seven, wasn't any good; she always gave away the answer, and then she'd laugh and laugh.

Suddenly there was a kind of 'humph' sound, as if the ship had the burps. Not a big noise, really. But it seemed to jar a lot of things loose; you could sort of hear splitting noises, and in a few seconds more, there was another burp, down inside the ship. That time, little Carol was tossed up in the air and landed flat on her stomach. Now you could hear things breaking everywhere, all at once. Windows and dishes, and big heavy planks—one broke about as easily as another. The children ran up the companionway.

'Now, don't get excited, anybody,' Richard was saying. 'Just keep calm, you kids.' *He* was the one who was excited, Mary thought. Mother always said *he* was the nervous one . . .

Everybody was running somewhere, all at once. People, pulling on their clothes after their naps, were tumbling out of their cabins, and the crew were running down the decks to their lifeboat stations. One lifeboat the children passed looked like somebody's winter kindling pile, just chopped but not yet stacked up neatly. The deck was tipping up on one side; as you ran you felt as if you had one leg too long and one leg too short.

And there was Mother, bending over putting on her shoes. Mother, looking very calm, as if she knew a secret.

'Here, into our boat,' Mother said. 'Robert, take Carol's hand—Richard, hold on to Mary . . .' They tried to climb into their boat, but it was on the high side of the ship, and it was tipped like a toy boat hanging against a wall.

'Not that boat—you can't get into that,' one of the officers shouted. 'Wait—we'll find another one . . .'

But suddenly there was no time to find another one, for your feet were wet, and you hadn't noticed you were standing in any water. Then your knees were wet, and you couldn't see the deck at all, for the water was coming up around you. But you knew that that wasn't it, really. The water wasn't coming up; the ship was going down. Very quietly it was going down. You really weren't frightened about it. The sea was almost like arms under you. Everlasting arms? Everything was swirling now, and you seemed to be going down and down. You knew that ships really went to the bottom and that when they did they pulled people with them the way a whirlpool sucks down a leaf.

There were all sorts of funny things around you, broken chairs and books and pieces of wood, and a boy's cap crazily looking for its owner. It was like green night, only the pressure wasn't like air, for it hurt your head and you couldn't breathe.

'We're in a shipwreck,' you said calmly to yourself. 'We're going to die, all of us.' There was a smear of cream puffs across your mind, not solemn enough to be called a thought at such a moment. You couldn't find a solemn thought, but you knew your mother was probably having 'em for all of you.

Then the green night began turning yellowish, and suddenly your head came up out of the water, and you were coughing and choking. The sun was shining, and things were floating around in the water — a scrub-brush, one shoe, a broken picture frame, a dining-room chair rocking giddily on a wave. And there, about fifty yards away, was your own mother, shaking her hair out of her eyes and looking around for you.

'Come over here, you children,' she called, as calmly as if she were standing on the piazza at home in the little mud-house in Africa. 'I've got a long plank for us.' She *would* have a long plank; Mother could always be

counted on to have something useful in her hand, no matter where she was. She got the other children onto the plank. All but the oldest Shaw girl.

The submarine came up about two hundred yards away and looked around. It was terribly quiet, except for the few people coughing and choking in the water. You kept looking around for the ship — the big ship where you used to run and play — and it was gone. Not even a mast was showing; it was just completely gone. The submarine looked around a few minutes, and then it went down again, and you could hardly believe you'd seen it, except that in that few minutes it had shot a few machine guns into the water at the people floundering there.

'God forgive them,' Mother said. 'God try to forgive them.' But the men in the water said other things.

After a while — time was funny there in the water, you couldn't tell whether it was a long time or a little time, or whether you were asleep or wide awake; none of it seemed real enough to be happening — after a while, the Captain, with no collar on, came over near you and he seemed to be sitting in a funny little box. It had slats like an orange crate. Captain Benjamin Bogdan was a large stout man and he was sitting in it; it looked pretty silly, that little crate — it looked like the floor without the seats of some kind of lawn swing. One of those swings your grandmother used to have in the summer, where people sat and looked at each other, and rocked back and forth. Some of the crew were there, too.

'Get on here,' he said. 'There's room for you people.' They dragged you on. There were no seats. In the middle of the raft was a place for feet. It wasn't a comfortable place to sit. The slats hurt your backside.

'We'll only stay on it a few hours,' you said to yourself, trying to sit comfortably. You sat twenty days.

Richard was scolding his little sister Carol. 'Don't be a baby. Nobody else is crying,' Richard said. 'Act your age.'

'Okay,' Carol said, and she tried to stop crying, for after all, she wasn't any baby. She was seven.

'Don't take up so much room,' Richard said to her. 'Sit over here close to me.'

'I can't,' Carol said. 'It hurts my arm, kind of. 'It's got a bump on it, kind of.'

It did have a bump, quite a big one on the elbow. And probably the reason it hurt, kind of, was because it was broken. It stayed broken, too, all the twenty days on the raft. It didn't hurt so very much, Carol said, if you asked her.

'God will cover it with His hand,' Mrs. Bell said to the little girl sometimes, 'the way it says in the hymn. Remember?' And Carol could remember.

They picked up all the people they could out of the water, and the other rafts were doing the same thing, of course. Just before nightfall, when the four rafts finally got themselves tied together, the Captain stood up and counted his company. There were forty-two of them in all, and that meant that about seventeen persons had been lost in the sinking.

'We'll stay together as long as we can,' he said, 'and may God help us.'

Night came down swiftly, and it was hard to believe that only a few hours ago there had been a ship, and people taking naps and dreaming about home and safety and cream puffs.

The waves were high during the night, and the fragile little rafts banged against each other, with a shuddering splintering rhythm. Finally Captain Bogdan stood up again and shouted to the men to untie their rafts.

'We'll be safer apart,' he said, 'and may we meet somewhere again, boys.'

There were nineteen of them on the raft with Mrs. Bell, fourteen men and four children.

'They had to do all the work,' Mrs. Bell said afterward, 'so we tried not to be any bother to them. But it's awfully hard not to move a little bit when you're sitting in a cramped position, and you're soaking wet, and everybody else is sitting terribly close to you.'

A raft, you know, is only eight feet by ten, less than the size of an ordinary nine-by-twelve rug. The Captain put a canvas over the bottom to make a kind of floor, but the waves washed over everything. He rigged up a makeshift sail at each corner of the raft, but they did little good for navigating. He stretched a piece of canvas in front of one end of the raft, shutting off some of the slats for privacy, and for the men who stood the watch. There wasn't much they could do, but doing that little seemed to help everybody.

'The way housekeeping kind of makes you feel at home even in a strange house,' Mrs. Bell said.

The water was full of palm oil, for that had been the cargo on the ship. Not nice palm oil which is supposed to give you that schoolgirl complexion, however, for it was pretty grimy by the time it was coating these weary, cheery people.

'But God was so good to give us that oil,' Mrs. Bell says. 'We reached down and rubbed it on our arms and faces, and it kept us from burning too badly. You see, we were in the tropics, and children have such tender skins.'

The Captain was full of confidence. After all, they were due in Trinidad in a few days. When the ship didn't come in, they'd send out planes to look for them. Surely by Wednesday, he said.

'We can stand it until Wednesday,' Mrs. Bell said to him. 'Don't you worry about us, Captain Bogdan.'

There were rations in the space under the raft, galvanized airtight containers of pemmican, which is a highly concentrated mixture of meat, coconut, raisins, and dextrose. And there were chocolate and two kegs of water, and a few cans of milk.

Nobody was hungry for a few hours after the ship had gone down. 'It seemed to take our appetites,' Mrs. Bell says gently. 'But the next day we were hungry.'

'There's plenty here to last until Wednesday,' the Captain said. 'Somebody will come looking for us on Wednesday.' So they ate rather lavishly, and they drank what they wanted. The worst discomfort was the closeness of everybody to everybody else. Try as you did to be polite about it, you just got sick of having somebody poking into your ribs all the time.

At night there was no place to lie down, of course. 'But the men were so kind to the children. They let them lean their heads on their shoulders,' Mrs. Bell said. 'They were all as gentle as mothers, those men.'

Monday and Tuesday, they lived only for Wednesday. All day Wednesday every eye scoured the sea and the sky. By night nobody could think of much to say. Dejection came down with the crushing twilight, and after it was dark you could hear some of the men sobbing to themselves.

'Wednesday or Thursday, that's what I said,' the Captain told them. 'Today they'll come surely.'

But they didn't come on Thursday, and by Friday nobody spoke of it. Nobody thought of anything else, but nobody spoke about it.

There were sharks in the water, of course. They came as close as they dared. A raft rides much nearer to the water than a lifeboat does, and all night in the darkness Mrs. Bell used to worry for fear one of the

sharks would come too close and nip a child. The Captain worried about that, too. He kept warning Mrs. Bell that she mustn't let the children's arms or legs hang out of the raft as they slept. Mrs. Bell couldn't see very well in those dark nights. So she had to trust God's eye to do most of the watching.

The children knew about the sharks; you can't have many secrets from each other on a raft. They didn't like the idea much themselves. But they knew they must trust God about it. And, as little Carol said, 'It's almost like Daniel in the lions' den, isn't it?'

Some of the seamen weren't acquainted with Daniel, much less the lions. And that's how Mrs. Bell began telling them the Bible stories. One every night, one every morning.

'Course they are just stories,' one of them said; 'like fairy stories, only these come out of the Bible.'

'They're true,' she said.

'They *was* true, you mean?'

'No. They *are* true. If they were ever true, they're still true, because God is true. God is what he always was. He hasn't lost any of his power,' she told them.

'You mean . . . ' They couldn't ask it in words.

'Yes.' She didn't need to answer in words. 'He can save us now, by His Power and His Might.' They sat and argued about it.

'What the hell?' some said. 'It's as good a thing to argue about as anything. We got plenty of time. What the hell?'

They had no Bible, of course, 'except the one I had locked in the inside of my heart,' Mrs. Bell says simply. So she opened that Bible and told them things out of it. A verse for every day. Sometimes the children picked verses from ones they had learned in Sunday School.

They sat there with their pitiful clothes slapping

wetly about their tired bodies and their oil-stained little faces lifted to heaven, saying Bible verses.

'I will bless the Lord at all times,' said seven-year-old Carol. 'His praise shall continually be in my mouth.' The men, those crude battered men who knew neither Bibles nor children, listened to those words and took that praise from a hungry child, and it was in their own mouths a new food.

Early in the afternoon they began getting ready for Mrs. Bell's Bible story. Getting ready meant only beginning to expect. There was nothing to do to get ready, nothing to do about anything, except what you can do with your mind and your thoughts — those clumsy weary thoughts they pushed around in the darkness of their numbed brains like heavy furniture. Thinking without acting is an excruciating process to men whose thoughts have been lustily synonymous with muscles.

'Tell us one about the sea tonight,' they'd say.

'Hell, we've had enough about the sea,' Louie would grumble.

Somebody would snarl at him: 'Not this sea, you dope. The sea in the Bible. She's going to tell us about the sea in the Bible.'

So Mrs. Bell would say: 'It is the same sea. Then as now.' Sometimes she'd tell them about the Red Sea and the children of Israel who walked through it on dry land, and Louie would say, 'Hell, do you believe that?' and Dutch would say to him; 'Sure I believe it. And if *you* don't believe it I'll knock your damned head off.'

Sometimes she told about the sea of Galilee, and how Jesus stilled the tempest. When they had had enough sea from the Bible, with their poor weary feet swollen from having to be in it day after day, she'd tell them dry-land stories — the good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son,

Joseph who couldn't get along with his brethren until the days of food rationing came.

Almost every day, and sometimes twice a day, they saw a rainbow, and the five believers in the company always said that it meant 'I am with you. I have not forgotten you.'

Bit by bit, the men who did not believe began watching for it also, and that couldn't have been entirely, Mrs. Bell said to herself, because they loved to see the colors.

The Captain, that big stout man, was beginning to show the strain. His clothes, wet as they were, were getting too big for him; his eyeballs were scribbled with bright red veins; at night, he forgot where he was and shouted deliriously. He was such a big man, he couldn't be comfortable any place.

When he got really bad, retching with pain and too weak to sit up, Louie crouched in the bottom of the raft on everybody's feet, and held him in his arms for hours. Like a baby, Louie held him, swearing to himself. Louie called it swearing, but he said God's name over and over . . .

When the Captain died, Mrs. Bell said the Burial Service. She said just what she could remember, and everybody bowed their heads, the children and the men, and some of them said 'Amen,' and Louie said what he pleased.

After the Captain left, there was more room, but nobody cared about that. Two days later, there was still more room.

They talked and talked. But they were strange conversations. They weren't people who had many subjects in common. Only weather and food, and there was too much of one and two little of the other.

'If you was to order a dinner, what'd it be?'

'Well, I'd have me some German pancakes, and a big pot roast, and some asparagus . . .'

'Naw. Whyn't you have duck and apple stuffin? Whyn't you have potato soup, say, and then some pork chops and turnips, and maybe a little mustard pickles . . .'

Even the children made up these imaginary meals. They didn't want peanut butter; they were too thirsty to want peanut butter. Sometimes Mary would say to her mother reproachfully: 'You know what you said.'

'I know, darling. Cream puffs.'

'You said I could have them for my birthday.'

'If it's God's will, you will have them, Mary.'

Sometimes Mary would weep and doubt. 'I'll *never* have them. We'll just *die* here.'

But Mrs. Bell wouldn't scold her.

Sometimes — ten or twelve times — an airplane came across the sky. A tiny airplane you could hardly see, like one lone letter on the unprinted page of the sky. They watched it, and screamed and waved, and it went along high and unhearing.

'Those were the loneliest times of all,' Mrs. Bell said. 'But lonely isn't just exactly the word. I guess we were too crowded to be lonely.'

The drinking water was gone now, the last precious drop. The sky, heartbreakingly blue and sunny, had not a cloud for a promise.

'We'll pray for rain,' Mrs. Bell said. 'You can pray out loud or pray to yourself.'

Louie said, 'Crazy to pray for rain when there ain't any clouds in the sky.'

But some of them prayed. The children prayed. Mrs. Bell searched that hidden Bible she carried in her heart, and finally she found this verse, which is the ninth one in the Sixty-Eighth Psalm:

Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

She kept saying that over and over; she kept believing that it was true, and that God had not changed nor lessened in power.

'Well, there's one cloud,' Louie said grudgingly. 'But it's not with the wind. It's against the wind.'

The men explained to her that there could be no rain from such a cloud. It was in one corner of the sky, and the wind was coming from the other. The wind would drive it farther away . . .

She closed her eyes again and prayed earnestly. She says she didn't try to imagine *how* God would make this rain, she only asked Him to. She says she said: 'Father, we need this rain. Please give it to us, Father.'

Nobody knew just how it came, not even Louie. But suddenly it seemed as if the whole sky, where the wind had been, was full of black clouds. And in a few minutes the rain, big plentiful drops of it, came down, cool and sweet as very words from heaven.

The men were beside themselves with joy. They held up everything they had to catch the rain. They jabbered, and held up their parched palms and licked them.

Mary and Mrs. Bell stood up and held the canvas which had been covering the bottom of the raft. One of the men put the little kegs under the hole in the center of the canvas, and Mary and her mother held the canvas so that every drop would run off of it into the keg. When it was full, they poured it out into the granite-ware drinking cup and everyone drank and drank. 'Not just a few spoonfuls,' she said. 'We drank and drank, and we thanked God for it.'

Out of that rain they filled their two kegs nearly full. Then the rain stopped, and they had had enough.

'It couldn't be anything but God that did that,' the men said.

'If God did that, He will save us all the way,' she told them.

But the days went by, and they were weaker and weaker, and it was harder and harder to believe that Something was going to lift them out of this cruel sunshiny emptiness.

The children's clothes had been burned nearly to threads. Mrs. Bell's dress had worn through, so that she was sitting only in her home-made Indian damask slip. Shoes had gone long ago, and feet, never once dry, had puffed and swelled until they looked like cushions.

Then an airplane came. It circled and came closer; they shouted and waved, straining their bloodshot eyes to see, straining their swollen tongues to scream.

It came low and hovered over them, and they could tell that the pilot was looking at them, counting them, even. They wept with gratitude. He went off a way and then came back as low as he dared, and dropped a parcel to them, wrapped in a yellow-oilcloth covering. Not onto the raft, of course, for that might have injured them dropping at the speed at which the plane was traveling. The box landed a little way from the raft, and when it hit the waves it burst open and there before their hungry eyes, the food spilled out and the bread they had tormentedly dreamed about floated out on the water, snatched up by the sharks.

But the pilot saw what happened, and he came back and tried again. This time the box bounded on the trough of a wave without breaking open. Two men took the 'doughnut,' a little rubber raft, and went out and brought it back.

Now, after grace was said, there was a feast. Not one box of pemmican for two people this time. Two boxes of pemmican for everybody — and chocolate, and malted-milk tablets. The box had dropped with such force that three bottles of the tablets had been smashed

within the carton that contained them. But there was plenty. And that night they sang and prayed and laughed even, because they knew that the plane had gone back to bring them a boat.

Sure enough, there was the boat at dawn, standing on the horizon. No use to call, of course, but they called anyway, recklessly throwing down the last coins of their energy. It came nearer. It wandered around all day, like a blind man tapping his cane on the pavement. And then, before their very eyes, it began getting smaller in the distance. It went away, and another night came down, and this time even the children gave up hope. The children whimpered and complained; the men grew angry and shouted at them.

'Keep them brats quiet, can't you,' the men said. And Mrs. Bell said to herself: 'Poor boys, maybe it makes them feel a little better to be angry with us. We're right here where they can growl at us.'

The next five days were the worst. It was hard to keep any kind of morale after that. They were angry with God now; they had believed in Him; they had given Him His chance, and what did He do? He laughed in their faces; that's what He did. He laughed.

The men didn't even care whether or not they kept the watches any more. Didn't matter. The sooner the quicker now.

But one morning, suddenly, a man shouted out. A kind of papery cackle, from hoarseness and thirst.

'A convoy — look, you guys, a convoy.'

This time, even Mrs. Bell didn't lift her head to look. 'It's just one of his deliriums,' she said to herself. 'I'm too tired to raise up my head and look.'

But one other man raised his head, and he too uttered that papery cackle. So then they all roused up again, and there, not so far away, was a long line of ships and two destroyers.

One destroyer separated itself from the convoy and came rapidly toward them. Everyone was standing in the little raft, shouting and praying, for there could be no mistake now. Here *was* a boat, and it had seen them.

And then an almost incredible thing happened. The destroyer started firing on them. One big shell burst on the right, and in a few seconds one exploded on the left. The people on the raft were stunned. The men, whimpering and grimacing, couldn't believe it was happening. The children, after a moment's dazed silence, began to cry. They all fell on their faces, and the shells kept coming, crashing down all around them. An angry spout of mustard-colored water shot up a few feet in front of the raft, and from its heart a big metal missile arched up, barely missing the heads of the weeping little company.

'Go ahead, you got us right here. Go ahead and kill us,' Louie sobbed. The shells kept coming, falling all around them.

They knew, of course, why they were being shot upon, because the submarines of the enemy have disguised themselves with rescue rafts such as this one.

In that moment, in the midst of those bursting shells, Mrs. Bell remembered one verse from the Bible—a strange verse, thrillingly fitting, for this is it:

For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

It *was* the glory, and God seemed to be in that wall of fire, because close as they came, not one shot touched them. Not one of the sixteen shells which they counted, not even a fragment of the metal grazed them.

'Get up, you men,' Mrs. Bell said. 'Look! You're not being hit. God is taking care of you. Get up and wave to them.' Wonderingly, the men realized that it was

true. The shells were falling all around them, in a kind of wall of fire, but Something was protecting them.

So they got upon their feet, and took down their improvised sail and waved it back and forth. They waved and they prayed, and you can guess which they did most vigorously.

In a few minutes, the destroyer drew near, and the rails were lined with boys' heads. No shouting now, no jubilee. Only silence and gratitude too big for any sound.

They lifted them off the raft, for suddenly they all realized that they could not take a single step on those swollen cushions of feet. Strong American arms lifted them up, the children and the men, and the tangled-haired brave woman with the Bible in her heart.

They put her in the Captain's quarters. When she moved, her clothes were so brittle from the sun and the salt that they cracked off her, and the sailors wrapped her in a man's silk bathrobe and laid her in the Captain's bed — 'just the way my mother would have done it.'

After they had lifted them off the raft, they turned their machine guns on the sharks that had followed them night and day, and they shot twelve of them.

Mrs. Bell, lying in a relaxed daze of happiness, heard the shots and knew what they were doing.

'Maybe they shouldn't have shot them,' she said to herself. 'They were well-behaved old lions in that Daniel's den.' Then she fell asleep.

It wasn't very far to Barbados — it was touchingly close really, on the right kind of vessel. So within a few hours the seventeen of them were brought into Bridgetown. The whole city seemed to hold them in its arms. The whole city was quiet that night, so the tired battered ones could sleep. And they slept between linen.

They let them sleep for as long as they wanted to,

dirty and matted and drugged with exhaustion. They woke up and drank hot tomato juice, and fell back to sleep. Then one by one they woke up and began to talk and to be themselves again.

The doctors couldn't believe they had withstood the ordeal as they had. They had lost weight, of course, but they were in amazingly good condition. The children especially; even little Carol, who had sat nearly three weeks soaking wet and with a broken arm.

In the hospital, the nurses and doctors, who have seen many rescued people since the war began, marveled at the good condition of these people.

'You know what I think?' one of the nurses said to Mrs. Bell. 'You look to me like people the Lord has been taking care of.'

'We are,' she said.

The nurses talked about it among themselves. Nurses are pretty realistic people. But this is what they said. They said it was as much of a miracle as when Jesus fed the five thousand people from five loaves and two little fishes.

The children had lost much less weight, proportionately, than the adults. Maybe Mary's cream puffs had nourished them . . .

'Hey,' Mary cried when she woke up. 'What's the date, for pity's sakes?'

'The eighteenth, honey. Now you just lie still and rest . . .'

'Why, tomorrow's my birthday . . . and my mother said if I was good — and it was God's will — I could have cream puffs for my birthday.'

Funny how news like that gets around an island. All day long, blacks and whites trooped up the hospital steps with birthday presents for Mary. Flowers and little dolls and sailboats. And cream puffs! Cream puffs and cream puffs.

'The Lord has all good to bless us with,' Mrs. Bell says. 'The good He has is good in our terms — not somebody else's. Just what we need, the symbol which expresses to us God's care and loving kindnesses — a silk bathrobe, a rain storm, or even cream puffs.' She says it in a gentle, simple way you can't quite imagine unless you've heard her.

'God can do today just what he did in the Bible. He's done it for us . . . and He'll do it for anybody that will trust Him.'

Out of the forty-two people who survived the torpedoing of that ship, only one more person was rescued. He came in alone on a raft, after the six men who started with him had perished from the hardships.

You don't wonder, do you, that Louie came into New York and, primed with such liquid courage as he seemed to need, made his way down to a little mission off Broadway, just so he could hug Mrs. Bell.

'She savea my life, by God,' Louie says. 'She madea the rain come; she madea the rain stop, by God.'

You can see that whether or not Louie believes in God, he certainly believes in Mrs. Bell.

Maybe that's a start anyway, for Louie.

Now, at least, he has a friend who has a Friend.

The Gunner, the Nipper, and Fairst

I COULD TELL when I saw him swaggering down the road that Mr. MacPherson was bringing me something. It practically shone out of his pocket. But Fairst's way is not to rush at you with an outstretched hand. His chestnuts wait within burrs.

He finished helping me prune the rose of Sharon tree, giving me very expert advice as we worked; we transplanted a tangle of iris and still nothing was said, and finally he picked up his hat from the garden bench and got himself all ready to go back up the road. I walked to the very edge of the drive with him.

'Oh, by the way,' he said casually, 'I brought you a couple of items.'

'For the book?' I tried not to sound too eager.

'Just items,' he said, not wanting to commit himself. He reached into that capacious pocket of his and took out a short newspaper clipping. 'This is not on the subject precisely,' he said, 'but it is a bonnie piece about a wee dog named Daisy, on a Norwegian steamer.'

Mr. MacPherson read out to me: 'Torpedoes hit the engine room, and the boilers exploded. Half the crew were killed and the rest had to dive overboard as the ship sank like a stone. There was not even time to launch a raft. One of the last to go was the gray-haired old steward and the ship's dog, Daisy.'

'The water was icy cold and the eighteen survivors were swimming around in the dark with nothing to hang on to. Swimming strongly from man to man, Daisy stayed by each one for a while, licking his cold face and barking cheerfully.'

Mr. MacPherson looked at me over the tops of his gold-rimmed reading glasses. Then he went on reading. 'The old steward said: "Many of us would have given up through cold and exhaustion but for Daisy. That warm tongue of hers, and her cheery bark brought life and hope to all hands." '

As he finished reading, he looked a little uncomfortable, and then he said with awkward earnestness: 'The thing I thought was this: you see, a man is almost like the Deity to a dog. You wouldn't want to disappoint a dog.'

'I see what you mean.'

'It's the nature of man not to disappoint something if it really believes in him,' Mr. MacPherson said earnestly, 'and it's the nature of a dog to believe.'

'Perhaps that's the pattern of the faith which saves itself,' I said. But sometimes Mr. MacPherson is hard of hearing.

He crumpled up the little clipping and tossed it away, and he looked as if he were going to forget the other item he had promised me.

'Oh, that,' he said when I reminded him. 'Well, that wasn't in a newspaper. It was something a seaman told me over at Freetown on the coast of Africa. This lascar was in one of the two lifeboats that survived from the *City of Benares*, which was torpedoed at the beginning of the war.'

'The *City of Benares*? Wasn't that the ship that was bringing the British children to Canada?'

'The same,' he said, and his face looked angry at the mere mention of that criminal happening. 'After she

was torpedoed and sank so quickly, one lifeboat made a long trip back across the North Atlantic, and was finally picked up by a British destroyer. There were five or six little boys in the boat, and a woman and a couple of officers, and six or seven lascars.

'The children and the woman kept their spirits up for days, telling stories and saying their little prayers and one thing and another. But it was terribly cold, and the little boys' feet were wet all the time. They had everything that a wrecked lifeboat does have to devil it — not enough food and water — all the creature discomforts — and finally one of the little boys got verry sick.

'There was a gunner in the boat, a big gruff fellow. He kept scolding everybody, and nagging them and saying that they weren't keeping up proper discipline.'

'He must have been just one more hardship for them to bear,' I said.

Mr. MacPherson looked at me patiently. 'No, I don't think so,' he said gently. 'The way I figure the gunner is this. He must have known that if everybody was mad at some *special* thing like him . . . well, that would keep their minds from being so full of other things, fear and hunger and the like of that. The way I figure the gunner is, he thought if they thought about *him*, they wouldn't be thinking so much about the danger.'

'I see what you mean.'

'Well, this little nipper got verry sick. There was a priest in the boat, too. He had been injured, but he did what he could to help. So now it came to the time when it looked as if he had better say the last prayers for the little boy.

'So after the prayers, the gunner came down where the little boy was. "What's all this nonsense?" he said. "What're you making all this noise and complaining about?"

"I'm cold," the little nipper said. "Of course you're cold. We're all cold . . . Here, let me feel your feet. I'll tell you what we do with cold feet. We rub 'em." He was crouching over the wee boy and shouting at him, and the boy kept trying to answer him. "Look here, I'm wrapping 'em up in my jacket . . . *that's* going to make 'em warm, all right."

"The little boy was in a kind of half-doze. "They're still cold," he said. The gunner pretended to get very angry then. "What kind of a British chap are you anyway?" he said. "Eight years old and whining about cold feet!" He went on shouting and scolding at the little fellow, and he kept answering him back. And before long he sat up again, and began getting better. He pulled through all right, the lascar told me.'

'That's a wonderful story, Mr. MacPherson.'

'Yes, it is,' he said. 'The gunner must have been a verry good man. He must have loved that little nipper. It sounded as if he was scolding him. But he was really loving him enough to want to wake him up and set him back on his feet.'

We walked along a few steps, and I dared to look up at Mr. MacPherson's face to see if he knew how wonderful was his parable. But his face was tightly closed against me.

'It sounds sometimes as if Something were scolding us,' I said. 'Perhaps *we've* only to wake up and answer.'

Exit, Praying —

IT WAS a lazy April day in 1942. It had been a dull season in Florida, for at last America was at war, and few people were vacationing. Some of the big hotels had been taken over by the Army and the Navy, and the rest were locked up for the summer.

A middle-aged man was lying on his back beside a swimming pool, feeling depressed and wondering how he was going to do his part in the war. A pair of very big masculine feet intruded on the view under his half-shut eyelids, and stopped in front of him.

'Guy was telling me over at the hotel that you're a swimming instructor,' a nice deep Southern voice said, with that edge of embarrassment that shows a self-made man getting rid of some more of his native ignorance.

The swimming instructor sat up and looked alert.

'Diving and swimming both,' he said, looking up at the tall athletic figure of the blond young man. 'I've taught some of the outstanding fancy divers . . .'

'I don't want to learn to dive,' the Southerner said. 'I just want to learn to swim. Not awfully well, necessarily; no fancy strokes . . .'

The swimming teacher looked at him questioningly, sizing him up as somebody who wanted polite exercise without anything so strenuous as going to war.

'Just want to swim enough to enjoy yourself,' he said tactfully.

'Well, not exactly,' the applicant explained. 'Just enough so I can paddle out of the way of a propeller and the suction when a battleship goes down under me.'

They worked at it for the next six weeks, and the instructor was more puzzled all the time. He kept trying to remember where he'd heard the guy's name. 'Larry Allen . . . Larry Allen,' he used to say to himself between lessons. 'Seems to me I've heard that name somewhere.'

It wasn't so strange that the name seemed familiar to him, for he was trying to teach 'the most shot-at U.S. foreign correspondent' to swim. The most shot-at, and probably the most shipwrecked, too. And the only man who was able to break down the Admiralty precedent and have himself appointed the first correspondent attached to the British Fleet.

It took him nine solid weeks of trying to convince the officers that it would be worth their while for Americans to understand what the British Fleet was doing.

He made seventy trips with the Fleet, traveling a hundred and ten thousand miles, but he never got around to telling anybody he couldn't swim a stroke. He called himself a Jonah on shipboard, because so many ships were blown up under him, and when he found himself flung into the ocean in the midst of a naval battle, he — well, he just prayed himself out of danger.

It was just before he was awarded the 1942 Pulitzer Prize for excellency in reporting international affairs that he managed to take time off and learn to swim.

He's a wonderful person, this Larry Allen. Ready-made for a novelist's fine American hero. His father was a coal operator in Mount Savage, Maryland, where Laurence was born. He died when Larry was eleven, leaving the boy to be the head of the family. His mother

took in sewing, and the youngster himself, who had wanted to be a war correspondent since he was four years old, ran errands, shoveled snow, and delivered groceries.

They were so poor that for a while, in order to go to school at all, he had to wear his sister's shoes. He used to smear them with mud so they wouldn't look like girl's shoes. Whatever it did to his pride, it did teach him to use his fists, and that is a good thing for a war correspondent to know. And it taught him also to use his sympathy, and that's an even better thing.

Allen says, 'America is the only country where your life is what you make it and if you want a thing badly enough you can probably get it.'

He wanted to be a newspaper man badly enough, all right, and at seventeen he got his first reporting job at fifteen dollars a week on the *Baltimore News*. He had three other newspaper jobs, and then the Associated Press hired him for its Charleston bureau. He worked up in the A.P. through Washington and New York, and in 1938 they made his dream come true and sent him to Spain.

When the big war started they assigned him to Alexandria to cover the British army, navy, and air services, in recognition of one of his outstanding talents, which is 'the ability to be wherever news is thickest and to report it with exciting accuracy.'

He was given the 1942 Pulitzer Prize for a series of highly dramatic eyewitness accounts of Mediterranean bombings, which he saw from the very bridges of British battleships. Practically everybody in the Mediterranean knew him, not only in the Allied navies, but in the Italian and German fleets as well. They called him 'the darling of the Mediterranean fleets,' and there probably weren't two men who realized that this dashing American, who was utterly fearless about being blown from

deck into sea whenever that had to be included in getting a good story, couldn't swim a stroke.

Larry Allen brought prayer into the news during January, 1941, when he reported that he 'had prayed for the first time.' The occasion was the bombing of the aircraft carrier *Illustrious* by forty or fifty Nazi Stukas which dumped a hundred thousand pounds of high-explosive bombs on the flight deck. At the same time they slammed at her sides with torpedoes, and the fact that the *Illustrious* wasn't sunk was called 'a miraculous survival.'

The battle went on for seven hellish hours. Allen said: 'Big bombs were dropping like hailstones. The Nazi dive bombers were droning like a chorus of madmen, and every gun on the *Illustrious* was firing everything it had at them. After four hours of this I said my prayers.' The Germans dived so low that the markings were plainly visible on their Junkers. They plunged into a wall of fire from the *Illustrious'* guns, and their dropped bombs rocked the ship so that it seemed they would tip her over on her side. The men at the stations were blown from their posts like popcorn every time the carrier suffered a direct hit—and she took seven of them during the battle.

An officer on the *Illustrious* said later: 'It was the most tremendous, terrifying thing I have ever seen. It seemed all the fires of hell had been kindled. The blast of a thousand-pound bomb is so crushing, so incredible that there are no words to describe it.'

But Larry Allen, burned and battered, stood right in the midst of it, finding words, for he had to get the heroic thing told.

Other British battleships in the convoy tried to beat off the German and Italian bombers, who had evidently made up their minds to destroy the *Illustrious*. Officers and men carried their wounded companions

across the flight deck to medical stations under direct machine-gun fire. Larry said that 'flame erupted in sheets from all the carrier's guns until, with smoke hanging over the flight deck, she looked like a moving monster of fire.'

A dive bomber darted in just in front of the bridge where Larry was standing on the starboard side, and his bomb threw up a column of water over the bridge. The blast blew the reporter down the hatchway and dropped him like a blot of ink thirty feet below to the deck, where a sheet of flame tried to swallow him up. But it couldn't digest him, and it couldn't muffle his words, for impressions were pounding in his brain, recording themselves for his story.

Already, badly burned though he was, he was writing it in his mind: "'We are hit," mumbled an officer, his face pressed against the floor, as the bomb creased the side of the carrier.'

Down in the engine room, the crew was keeping one turbine and then another operating, repairing as they had to, and then resorting to steam pressure to keep the *Illustrious* nosing along eastward to the nearest port, which was Valletta, Malta. When that port was in sight, the German torpedo bombers made one last assault. Rear Admiral George Lyster barked out orders to his men even while shrapnel and machine-gun bullets hailed down on him. On the bridge below Captain Dennis Boyd puffed on his pipe and shouted commands.

'All hands to action stations.'

Three Stukas swooped in with torpedoes, but only a second before the Captain had ordered full speed, and the torpedoes harmlessly cut the air to ribbons just behind the stern of the speeding ship.

She made port, and the fire squads worked on a small fire in her interior, while shipwrights plugged up the

bomb holes and the dead were separated from the wounded. The medicos wanted to put Larry to bed.

'Heck, it's only my face,' he said. 'My hands are perfectly good, aren't they?' So he went down to his rickety typewriter and banged out the story for the Associated Press.

At another time, he went in with Admiral Sir Andrew Browne Cunningham's flagship for a showdown with some of Mussolini's port-hugging battleships. They daringly sailed through the mine-laden waters of Tripoli harbor and sprayed the waterfront with fire. Allen was an eyewitness to the battle of Crete, when millions of pounds of German bombs tried to prevent the evacuation of British troops. And he went with a British squadron on an invasion of the virtually landlocked Adriatic to attack Valona, on the Albanian coast. They knew they were putting their heads in a dangerous trap, but they went in anyway, and to their surprise, and to the astonishment of the world watching the feat, they slipped around the heel of the Italian boot and battered Valona into helplessness. Filed under Larry's by-line have been some of the war's most audacious stories, including the one about the 7200-ton *Terror* that waddled past Italian land batteries and poured six hundred tons of TNT into the port of Bardia.

'At one time,' Allen wrote, 'the torpedoes were so thick in the water the British could almost knit them.'

His nearest brush with death, which earned him the title of the 'A.P.'s indestructible Larry,' was aboard the cruiser *Galatea*, thirty-two miles off Alexandria.

Larry knew, of course, that he couldn't swim a stroke. So he stood still on the deck and prayed, according to his own story. 'I couldn't swim, and I knew I was going to die. I mumbled a prayer and then rushed to the starboard side.'

The cruiser turned over and hurled everything it had

into the sea. With a half-blown-up lifebelt clutched to him, he slid feet first down the deck, afraid the deep dive would force the air out of his lifebelt. He says he prayed every minute, and he kept bobbing to the surface of the water, swallowing gallons of oily slime, and then going under again.

'It was the most terrifying, most agonizing experience of my life. I battled to live with all the strength I could summon,' he says.

Forty-five minutes of this hell, his muscles knotted up with the cold, his brain pounding, and his flame-seared throat crying out prayers. Then, about seventy-five yards ahead, loomed the tall sides of a destroyer. He tried to get closer, but he couldn't seem to direct his flounderings. A big wave snatched him up and washed him almost under the destroyer's propeller. Then, a long oily rope came over the side of the ship. He grasped it, but he hadn't strength enough left to hold on.

Voices called down to him reassuringly. But he couldn't hold on to the rope. Just then a life raft bobbed close to him, nearly crushing him against the side of the ship. The sailors on the raft apparently didn't see him, for they leaped from the raft and grasped the rope, stepping on his head and pushing him below the surface.

Then, he says, a young British sailor on the raft saved his life. He tied a rope under Allen's arms and flung it to the quarterdeck of the destroyer, where some sailors slowly pulled him out. On the quarterdeck they laid him out, squeezed some of the oily water out of his lungs, and cut off his clothes. Some of them didn't think he was alive enough to work with, because there were so many wounded survivors to take care of. He could hear them whispering to each other as they worked.

'He's finished — it's no use,' he says he heard them saying.

'But I kept thinking, "What a swell story! I've got to live."' He wrote his story as soon as he landed in Alexandria. This time on a borrowed typewriter, for everything he had was at the bottom of the Mediterranean with the *Galatea*. When he'd finished, he went to bed for a week.

Then, for the first time in twenty-eight months since he had managed to break down the old tradition that the British Fleet never has a press box aboard, the Fleet came home without him. He had been taken prisoner by the Axis, in a daring Commando attack against Tobruk.

The Italian radio reported the news that an American newspaper man had been taken prisoner, but they withheld his name. They did, however, say that he floored his Axis captors by demanding an interview with General Rommel — and that was as good as a description of the intrepid Larry. Later the German DNB admitted that it was Larry Allen, and that he had been picked up in a boat, his uniform not even wet. In November, 1942, a card came to the International Red Cross at Geneva written by Larry and saying he was 'all right,' and a prisoner of the Italians. 'Expecting soon to write again,' he said, and knowing him, that's a mighty sure bet.

Curiously enough, the very last story he ever filed before his capture was a résumé of his activities with the Fleet, a summing-up. In this brief story, he tells twice about praying.

The play isn't finished; we've only reached the second act. The last line of the script said, 'Exit, praying.' There'll be a third act; there's bound to be, for a hero like Larry Allen.

The City that Wouldn't Die

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

II Corinthians 4

THE CITY went down, but the people went up. The city was smashed into the obscenity of rubble; but the people, with every devastating blast, were made more whole. The city was shaken apart, but the people were shaken together.

Those that were not killed, of course. And of the stature of those who were killed, we are not qualified to speak. But if we cannot complete the equation, we can at least concede some ratio between that noble disaster which was London in the Blitz, and the sublime 'things which are not seen.'

It is not a complicated miracle, if we don't muffle it in big language. It is as commonplace as kindness, raised to the *n*th degree under emergency. The things people do every day, only now thrown up into magnificent relief by that green lightning of terror from the sky. Even a loaf of bread becomes bizarre and unearthly when it is illumined by lightning. This chapter tells of the bread of human nature, etched in light against the darkness of London under bombing.

People in London didn't change very much under

the Blitz; the lightning simply showed us what they are — what we all are. And that is miracle enough, what we are.

From early September until late spring (1940-41) London was a city of horror. No need for telling about that; everyone knows about the shivering, shattered houses, the walls that went down into powder, the great craters in the streets, the blown-up hospitals and schools. And the fire gnawing over everything. All that is too well known to need retelling. But the goodness of the people — and how that goodness in them protected them from utter devastation — does need thinking about, now and ever.

The goodness of the people was almost as big news as was the badness of their situation. The goodness was a halo over the horror, and it was reflected on every newspaper page that told the story. On the seventh of September, when the Blitz had barely started and there was endless news of destruction to be reported, the London *Evening Standard* said, 'Something flowers among the ruins, something so fine and noble that not all the powers of hell can destroy it.'

In the midst of terror and horror, people were discovering each other — and themselves — in all their goodness and cheerfulness and lovableness. This was the 'weight of glory,' the big news of the day.

For instance, someone thought this was a discovery worth writing down. A pair of shoes had been taken to a shoemaker, and the next day when the owner called for them, the little shop was gone. No, only half-gone, for a fragment was left in the midst of ruins. In that half-a-shop sat the shoemaker, busily mending shoes. A million plucky people like the shoemaker became patterns by which others cut their own actions. People *noticed* each other; people behaved well for each other's sake.

The high and the low mingled for the first time, and for the first time saw each other — as in a mirror. It was a good sight. The King and Queen, immaculate and royal, came down to Lambeth in their chocolate-colored Daimler, and picked their way among the rubble.

'Gor — it's the blinkin' King and Queen!' a bewildered Cockney shouted when he recognized them. The King and Queen went about, asking sympathetic questions, offering good little human suggestions. Just being people, in fact. When they got back into the Daimler to drive away, the homeless dusty crowd took off their hats and cheered them.

'You're a great King, Your Majesty,' the boldest Cockney called.

'You're a great people,' the King called back.

That was more than an episode; that was a revelation, and it went on happening all up and down the scale.

When Buckingham Palace was bombed the first time, it happened that the royal family was in residence in Windsor. But they came back immediately and moved into the damaged palace, unwilling to spare themselves anything their humblest subject was facing.

Winston Churchill, too, ordered some departments which had been evacuated from Whitehall to a safer district to return.

'We're all in this together' got to be the passport to a new country of the heart. You heard it on every hand, not gloomily at all, but as a declaration of good-fellowship.

Kindness and industry and bravery ran like contagion from deed to deed. People cared for each other as they had never cared before. This caring became a vast wordless prayer that held the city in its arms, heartening and protecting the smallest and the greatest.

A woman from Cheshire wrote to some American cousins: 'There is a strange feeling over here of peace —

not peace between armies, but the peace of mind that comes through knowledge of having cast off something evil and faced up to right. Please don't get the idea that we are feeling grandiose or pompous; rather the reverse — humbly thankful that it has been our lot to live through this hour.'

In the earliest days of the Blitz, it seemed that the Nazis were especially seeking out hospitals. One little maternity hospital was hit several times. A doctor in one of them tells this story. A woman who was dangerously ill was being given a blood transfusion in an operating room when the bomb struck. The doctor thought she was unconscious, but she opened her eyes and said: 'Don't bother about me, doctor. You'd better go see to the people who may need you.'

He glanced around, still stunned from the deafening percussion, and realized that everything in the room had been demolished except the table on which the patient was lying.

'No, not quite everything,' he adds dryly. 'One glass bottle was left unbroken. It was the bottle from which we were pouring blood into her veins.'

From Westminster, someone writes: 'There are many instances of wonderful protection everywhere. A woman was bathing her baby in a cottage in our village, and the cottage was literally demolished around her. But she and her baby were quite intact. We are grateful for the guidance and protection ever at hand.'

In Tunbridge Wells they reported: 'Houses are destroyed, but casualties are small. In a neighboring town a few days ago they dropped eight bombs. They all fell in the gardens in the center of the town and hurt no one. Forty-two bombs fell on one small farm, and no one was killed. It seems unbelievable, but it is true, and can be vouched for. Don't worry about us. We are

winning the war, and no weapon that is fashioned against us shall prevail.'

A letter from Perthshire, Scotland, to the United States says:

'So far, we have not fared too badly in our immediate family. Cousins have been bombed out of four separate houses. One couple had a very narrow escape; the husband had been called up and the little wife and her new baby were dug out uninjured. My sister was bombed out of one house and as her things were being moved into another on the other side of London, bombs were dropped in the next road. In my mother's house the large landing window, bathroom windows, dining-room door, and garage doors were blown down like matchwood, and an aunt was killed at Coventry.

'It is simply miraculous the few people killed, even in the raids. This I, and others, attribute to the prayers that are being offered. For instance, in my home town four hundred houses were destroyed, yet only two people were killed.'

From London a woman writes to a friend in America, a letter which was subsequently published in a newspaper. 'I have come across no one really afraid. The villagers are quite calm. So are the people on the trains, though it took us ages coming down to London last Friday, owing to a raid. We had to remain stationary with blinds drawn.

'The protection in moments of danger has seemed miraculous. A woman I saw last week knew it was divine protection in answer to her prayers, for two hundred incendiary bombs fell near her cottage, one within four yards, and two others in her garden. No one was touched or hurt and nothing hit the cottages.'

Seaports where the convoys came in were raided from two to six times daily and many times every night. But through it all, the dock hands unloaded precious car-

goes, knowing that their very houses were being smashed. Someone speaking about these men said, 'Hitler has no weapon to fight such spirit.'

An aristocratic motherly woman was cutting roses one day in her walled garden when a dive bomber came over and sprayed bullets all around her. She was so amazed that she completely forgot to be frightened. She did what she had never done before in her life; she shook her fist at the machine gunner, and told him exactly and precisely what she thought of him. Then she remembered to dodge under a tree, and there she realized that though the bullets had showered down upon her, she had not been touched.

A woman from Monmouthshire said in a letter: 'My thought wanders back to one who two thousand years ago removed fear and evil from men's minds and healed their bodies and left perfect directions for doing this today. One talks of these things now, and finds a great number of people who, together with our young King, "place their hand in God's" and go forward.'

Over and over one hears how little hatred there was against the men who were flinging down destruction. A friend wrote:

'It is very remarkable that even in times of the most violent attacks one seldom hears expressions of hatred toward those who are attacking us.

'During the Blitzes my windows were blown out three times, and my rooms were flooded once, but there is not even a broken teacup or a scratch on any of my furniture. Once the couch on which I was lying was covered with splinters of broken glass; a large piece of shrapnel whizzed past my head, but there was not a scratch on me, and not a cut of any kind on my clothing.'

One of the most moving stories I know was told to me by a friend who has 'commuted' back and forth between England and America during the last three years.

She told of a simple woman who had survived several bombed-out houses, in which quite a few people had been killed.

That woman said, 'No matter what is happening outside of me, I don't allow any bomb of hatred to fall into my own mind.' My friend asked her what she thought about while the bombs were falling. She thought a moment, then she said with childlike simplicity: 'I just look up at the sky and I think about that boy in the bombing plane. Then I say to him what Saint John said to all of us.'

'What is that?'

' "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." '

People who had nothing but material possessions often lost all. But those who were aware of possessing some other treasures of the heart and the mind and the spirit found those multiplied.

Beatrice Warde, an American girl living in London during the Blitz, is back in New York now, and she tells me that many people felt this. She says that a friend once said to her, 'I don't feel so sorry for the people as I do for the buildings.' She realized what he meant, and she says it was a fairly general feeling. 'All a building has is its decency,' she says. 'It hasn't a human soul to dignify even the worst-wounded body, or to escape to God if it comes to that. Its whole personality is in its structure.'

A letter from London, written while a fire was burning only a hundred yards away, says, 'The Germans can do all that material damage, but it does not affect the result of the war, as they cannot bomb, blast, or burn the spirit of the people.'

But that spirit of the people was unknown even to itself until this fiery trial came upon it. I find a very moving letter from a boy which was published in the *Church of England Newspaper*, in London.

'I am seventeen years old,' he wrote, 'and work in a factory. The other night, when the sirens woke me, I was shaking from head to foot and was full of fear of what might happen. Then I listened to God for a few minutes and He told me that I must be calm and cheery, and set an example to the other people, and give them confidence.

'I went down to the shelter with our next-door neighbors and friends, and found that they were a bit shaky. Then I carried out my guidance to set the example to other people, and give them confidence.

'Then it was all marvelous, the spirit; none of us was afraid, and it inspired us all to sing the "Songs of the Rising Tide." We sang them all. "Wise Old Horsey," "Youth Awake," and the rest. Then the neighbors joined in, in the shelters all around us, and the whole row was singing with us.

'This so inspired Maudie, who is also a factory worker, that she asked me three times to pray for everyone. I had never done this in my life before in public, but I did it, and I think it helped everyone.' I think it probably did, too.

A man from Liverpool wrote to some business friends in America: 'Humor is a saving grace, and this country is full of it. We laugh many, many times when it seems unseemly, but it saves the situation and turns a city of desolation into a city of joy.'

A prim motherly little woman was sitting as quietly as she could upon a divan trying to read, while thundering gunfire was going on overhead. The house shook every once in a while, almost knocking the book from her hands. But she pretended not to notice. 'One good thing,' she said in a pleasant little voice, 'we seem to be bothered with very few flies these days.'

A little girl came running home in great excitement.

'I've got my name on a waiting list,' she said.

'What kind of waiting list?'

'To buy an orange. The greengrocer said she'd put my name down right next to Edie's mother's name.'

'That's lovely. When do we get the orange?' cried the family, who hadn't seen a fresh orange for weeks.

'We're seven hundred eighty-ninth on the list,' the little girl said cheerfully.

During an air raid two rather timid women were working on an ambulance in an area which was being heavily bombed. They had made several trips with the ambulance filled. Bombs and incendiaries were still falling all around them. Suddenly one of the women clutched the arm of the other, and pointed breathlessly ahead of them.

'Look — that enormous yellow parachute coming toward us — *Duck*. . . .'

When they took their hands away from their eyes, they both said 'Oh!' rather sheepishly. It was only the full moon, rising over the horizon.

When walls went down, the intrepid Londoners often put up defiant signs.

'We're out — but not out of business,' said a cardboard on a demolished restaurant, and there in the midst was the proprietor calmly making a kettle of stew.

The world of people who feel that children are the most important persons on earth worried considerably about how they might take this ordeal by fire. They took it, of course, in every possible way, just as the adults did, well and badly, and all the degrees between. But many of them, in spite of the noise and destruction which went on day after day, arrived at some kind of mental poise, not to say exultation.

I know the story of one little ten-year-old boy. His family had slept in the Anderson shelter until just before Christmas. The house had been blown apart, and then repaired enough so that they could return to it.

During a night of fiercest bombing, this child's parents came into the nursery several times to see how their three small children were standing it, but each time the children were fast asleep. In the morning, after the world had quieted down again, little John's mother asked him what kind of night he had had.

'Not too bad,' he said. 'I heard the noise.'

'Yes, I should imagine you did. It was pretty bad, wasn't it?'

'I didn't want it to wake up the little ones,' John said, 'so I just pulled an extra blanket of God's protection over them.'

'Then what did *you* do?'

'Why, then I just went back to sleep.'

One family from the East End of London is typical of the best of them.

They had a lively time of it; the roof of their little home fell on them one night, and the A.R.P. came immediately and dug them out, brought them some hot sweet tea, gave them some blankets, and bundled them into the nearest street shelter.

Hardly had they got the nice A.R.P. man properly thanked when a bomb landed directly on the shelter next to theirs, blowing it to bits and partly smashing in the one in which they were settling down.

The youngest child, a quiet little scrap of a five-year-old, was blown like a rag-doll right out of the shelter, and over a bungalow near-by.

'No matter what else you do, you've got to find my Maizie,' the mother said, not unreasonably, as soon as she had counted up and found Maizie missing.

'Don't you worry, now; we'll find her,' the warden said. 'You just rest quiet, Mrs. Smith, on account of your condition.' Mrs. Smith's condition was obviously delicate, in an advanced stage of delicacy.

The warden climbed over the rubble, looking and

looking for Maizie. But there wasn't a sight of her. The night went on, and the raid subsided; every half-hour or so, he popped back into the damaged shelter to reassure Mrs. Smith.

'Now, don't you worry, Missus. We're going to find Maizie in a minute now,' he kept saying. She tried not to worry, remembering her delicate condition, but three hours and a half had gone by since Maizie was blown out like a piece of paper.

And then, at last, on a heap of rubble, he found her with her face buried in the cinders just where she had been flung, too scared to get up and look around.

'Well, here you are,' he cried in relief. 'And how are you, my fine girl?'

She looked up at him from a stained and battered little face. 'I'm not so very badly hurt, sir,' she said in a little squeak about as big as a mouse's.

And she wasn't either. Not so very badly. So the warden picked her up, brushed her off, bandaged her up, and then took her back to her mother.

'The idea!' said Mrs. Smith, so relieved she could afford to be a little fierce about it. 'I thought I told you to stay close to me!'

A few days later their house was again bombed, and this time everything they owned in the world was destroyed except the clothes they were wearing. So then they were sent to Sturminster (and high time, too!) to a lovely maternity home which the government had hastily set up in a commandeered country house.

The only trouble with that was that everybody there had a bomb story of her own, and nobody wanted to listen to *yours*. But the woman who had lived in the country house before it became a maternity home, was wonderful about listening. She listened by the hour, but when she sympathized about the loss, Mrs. Smith got brusque and bashful about it.

'Coo, it's nothing,' she said modestly. 'You get used to it.'

One story which has been told rather extensively I want to include in this account, principally because it is a significant measure of these times that such a story should be considered appropriate material for such a journal as *Banking*, where it appeared in the September, 1942, issue.

It seems there was a little girl who had experienced a succession of nights of bombing. When she went to bed she said her usual prayers, asking God to take care of members of her family. Then she added very earnestly, 'And now, God, please take care of yourself. If anything happens to you, we are all sunk.'

However many private miracles there were in that beleaguered island, there is one miracle which belongs jointly to all of them. This is the miracle of Saint Paul's Cathedral, which stood, barely damaged, on the night of December 29, while everything around it raged with consuming fire.

So that you may see I am not exaggerating the public acknowledgment of 'miracle,' I want to quote from the 1940-41 *Official Story of the Civil Defence of Britain* (page 32), published by His Majesty's Stationery Office:

An unforgettable sight. The whole of London seemed involved, one great circle of overwhelming disaster, save in one corner where the night sky was clear. One could not distinguish known buildings through the great clouds of smoke, except when there was a sudden spurt of yellow flames which lit a church tower. . . . It seemed impossible that the City, that London, could be saved. There was only that one small bit of calm sky in the distance as a symbol of hope that the circle would not be completed. At last the news came through that water supplies were being

restored — that the miracle had happened — Saint Paul's was saved and the City, devastated, was still the City.

More than fourteen hundred fires were raging that night, and at least twenty-two of them would have been front-page news around the world if war had not already become an old story. The water mains had broken and the water supply had suddenly failed. Firemen, helpless on the roofs, had an unparalleled view of Saint Paul's majestic dome silhouetted against the blaze — and above it that clear open patch of sky. The cross on top of the great dome dominates the skyline of London as the Capitol dominates in Washington, D.C. This night, when it seemed as if the whole city was one blaze, that cross and that dome stood out like a visible signature of God.

A London *Daily Mail* reporter called it 'an island of God, safe and untouched.' Another *Daily Mail* writer, Arthur Pugh, said: 'I gazed at Saint Paul's and saw a miracle. Buildings on all sides of the churchyard are wrecked — Debenham's big drapery warehouse, half of Hitchcock William's store, a big block of offices. But the Cathedral itself is untouched. In the porch a tall Christmas tree glitters with colored lamps — a reminder of a time of peace and goodwill, oddly out of place in the scene of warfare. . . .'

Saint Paul's, the proud and the dearly beloved both in England and throughout the world, has been no stranger to miracle in this war. Very early in the Blitz one of the most exciting dramas yet told was enacted under the Clock Tower in the southwest corner of the Cathedral.

It began, as drama often does, in a whisper. Well, a comparative whisper. For the Nazis in the sky who started it dropped a half-ton bomb with Saint Paul's

sacred name on it, and then they strained their eyes expecting to see the Christopher Wren masterpiece leap into the air and crumble to dust.

But instead, there was only a dull thump — well, fairly dull compared to the deafening thunder which was happening everywhere — and the huge projectile buried itself twelve feet deep in the earth. Then, because of its mighty weight, it began tunneling itself deeper and deeper into the ground. When it was discovered that the enormous bomb was not a 'dud' but really a delayed-action time bomb, everyone knew how critical was the situation.

Already, although the Blitz was really only a week old, the bright red-and-yellow truck of the Bomb Disposal Squad was a feared and familiar sight to Londoners. When that warningly painted little vehicle hurried through the streets, everyone gave it right of way and plenty of room, for they knew that the infernal bundle carefully cradled in its specially constructed rack wasn't foolin'.

This was the bomb disposal truck's most dramatic appearance, and soon everyone in London knew where it had stopped, and what potential hell was nestling in the bottom of that crater on Ludgate Hill. A call went out for volunteers to help, and fire-fighters and civilians gathered white-faced around the carefully barricaded section to watch what was happening. The hero of that hour, and of the eighty-six tense hours which followed, was Lieutenant Robert Davies, of the Royal Canadian Engineers, in charge of four trusty lads, all young and brave, and one of them from Ireland.

When a peace-blessed future comes and little boys play games in England, there'll be many pretending to be Captain Robert Davies. (He was promoted when they gave him the George's Cross later.) Every child in the Empire knows his name, and loves him.

But he wasn't thinking of being a hero that terrible September morning. He wasn't thinking of himself at all. He and his men began digging down into the sand and gravel where the half-ton of danger was lodged, trying to get a grip on it. But faster than they could dig, the heavy bomb was slipping lower and lower, on a diabolical downward course, slithering through a stratum of black mud, diagonally heading for Saint Paul's.

Then a fire blazed out from one of the gas mains, sizzling into the bomb menacingly. But the men, in spite of the terrific danger from what *Time Magazine* called the 'broiling bomb,' worked feverishly. All that day and night they dug and struggled, twenty-five feet underground by now, with lights played upon them from above, and gas fire surging over them. The men from the gas company worked beside the Royal Engineers, trying to extinguish the blaze.

According to the London *Times*, these gas workers performed 'a miraculous task, completing in a few hours, work that normally, taking all usual precautions, would have occupied two days.'

Time was all-important, of course, and the Bomb Disposal Squad dared not wait to put up scaffolding or supports to keep the roadway from caving in on them as they dug. They were not only facing death fearlessly, those white-faced men, but handling it, and handling it hour after hour, day and night.

Nobody knew what kind of bomb it was. It had special fuses which made it difficult to handle. Lieutenant Davies and his boys labored on, snatching a bite of food at their shovels, dropping down for a nap when they had to, but not wasting a second. With every minute the bomb was slipping deeper and deeper under the Cathedral into a position where no one could reach it, and where if it exploded, it would blow off the whole front of the beloved building. For three days and

three nights this went on, while the city held its breath and prayed.

But finally the lad deepest in the crater struck something with his spade.

'I've got it,' Sapper George Cameron Wylie shouted in a hoarse whisper. 'Wait till I try it again.' They waited, and he tapped his spade against the bomb. The sound rang out, and the men didn't breathe, expecting an 'icy, blinding flash of death.' But death was not present in that scene. Only the city's prayers were present.

Steel tackle gripped the bomb then, slipped off and gripped again, groveling greasily in the black mud. They hauled it back up through its slippery closed-in tunnel. Twice it writhed from their grasp and plunged back into the ground, and each time the brave men, with perspiration pouring down their faces, thought *this* was going to be the end.

But at last it came out, a menacing devil of a thing, nearly eight feet tall, and full of hell roaring to get out and tear a building to pieces. They hoisted it carefully on the truck and lashed it in the cradle, still hurrying frantically. Lieutenant Davies himself took the wheel of the truck.

'Wait a minute, sir,' the lads called. 'You said that when we had time we could do it . . .'

'Do what?' Lieutenant Davies said, almost afraid to speak for fear of setting off the explosion.

'You said we could sign the guest book in the Cathedral.'

'Go sign it,' the lieutenant muttered. 'But for God's sake, hurry.'

So the four of them — boys they were, you see — scampered back as fast as they could go, and put their names in the big august guest book.

Sapper George Cameron Wylie

Sergeant James Wilson

Lance Corporal Herbert Leigh

All but one, that Irishman whose name nobody seems to know.

Soberly then they leaped back on the truck, and Lieutenant Davies drove it swiftly but carefully away, with motorcycle policemen clearing the streets before it, and sirens blowing as it passed. At Hackney Marsh the terrific bomb was set off, and it churned up the swamp like an angry beast tearing up a hundred-foot crater in its rage, and shattering windows half a mile away.

But the people of London, and the Reverend Doctor R. W. Mathews, Dean of Saint Paul's, who had stayed in the Cathedral throughout the whole hair-raising experience, said a prayer of gratitude. The *Weekly London Letter*, which is an official utterance of the British Information Service in America, said, 'Christopher Wren's masterpiece was saved from complete destruction by an Act of God and the magnificent courage of a handful of men.'

Since that day, of course, Saint Paul's has been bombed and damaged, but not irreparably. At that bombing, also, there was protection. The *Manchester Guardian* said, 'It was a miracle that no fire followed the explosion.'

Indeed, the bomb revealed the amazing strength of the nearly three-hundred-year-old structure. Pieces of masonry which crashed onto the floor must have weighed at least two tons, and yet the floor stood solid and unhurt, spanning the crypt.

What the miracle of Saint Paul's means to the British people was eloquently told by Lord Halifax, when he spoke in America over the National Broadcasting System in September, 1942.

'Two years ago, Saint Paul's was hemmed in by offices, shops, commercial buildings of every kind. All these have crumbled into dust and ashes under Nazi bombs; and today Saint Paul's stands clear, majestic, its great cross of gold above the city, sharp cut against the sky.

'Surely there is something symbolic in that. The confused mass of buildings has gone; the rubbish has gone; but what really matters remains.'

The humblest Londoner owns that miracle. Whenever he chooses to, he can raise his eyes above the ruined skyline of London, and there, like a beloved symbol, 'afloat upon ethereal tides, Saint Paul's above the city rides.'

But the city itself, flattened out and battered from many attacks, is still magnificent in its true being — 'a city not made with hands,' which nothing ever can destroy.

*Men Can Always Do the
Superhuman Things —*

HE SAID IT TO ME so quietly, with such masculine understatement, that at first I didn't quite take it in. He was telling me about some inexplicable feats he had seen men accomplish in this war.

'Men quite often fail in small tasks,' he said. 'But they can always do the superhuman things.' After he had gone and I was thinking over some of the things he had told me, I began to see what he meant — what a wealth of reliance he implied — that when the need is superhuman, there is a hand outstretched, even though it seems at the time that the hand which does the deed is one's own.

There have been many such feats in this war. When they were being accomplished, the men who did them were not amazed at themselves. It was only later that they knew.

For instance, there was young Clifford Anderson, an aviation cadet who found himself in a blind spot one night. He was flying a routine training flight about nine o'clock, when suddenly some trouble in his motor made it imperative that he land immediately. He was too far from any landing field to glide in without power, and too low to use his parachute. The visibility was so poor that he says he felt as if he were on the inside of an ink

bottle looking out. Having not the slightest idea what was under him, he began gliding down.

'I could see the ground under me, and that was all,' Anderson says. 'I knew that nine out of ten forced landings at night mean death for the pilot, and the lucky one out of the ten is usually pretty much smashed up. But there was no choice except to keep coming.'

Somehow he felt himself being put down gently in a three-point landing, and after a minute he got out of his plane and looked around. A farmer was running across the field, waving and shouting.

'Listen here . . . you just missed my house by a couple of feet, young man,' he shouted, trembling and mopping his brow.

'Sorry, sir — I couldn't help it,' Anderson said, beginning to tremble a little himself.

Unable to speak for excitement, the farmer pointed up at a windmill, which the plane had cleared by about three feet. But what the flier was gazing at was the thing most feared by pilots — a power line. It was only about twenty feet away and running parallel to the line on which Anderson had come in. And that wasn't all. Directly in front of the plane was a fence and another power line!

The spot where the plane was now standing was a small cornfield, surrounded on all sides by danger. It was not in any sense a landing field, but rather a four-sided box full of trouble — much too small a box for any pilot, however expert, to try to land in.

'I never would have attempted a landing there in daylight, because it just couldn't be done. It wasn't humanly possible,' Anderson says.

The next morning they had to move the plane out by hand, rather than to attempt any take-off with it.

The official report reads, 'No injury to personnel, no damage to aircraft, and no property damage.'

The other flying youngsters look at that report sometimes. They just can't believe it. But when they asked Anderson about it, he said:

'Well, there's only one answer. The Lord did it for me.'

That's all he says, because kids don't talk much about the Lord. But he wrote down an additional, boyish statement for the Chief of Army Chaplains, and this is what he said:

'I have put my life in His hands. I wish more people could realize that we are not self-sufficient. I have much to be thankful for this year.'

This year — when woe walks the earth!

Something besides skill pulled an American Flying Fortress through one of the Wilhelmshaven raids, according to some of the men who flew her. Lieutenant Hugh Ashcroft, the pilot, said after they got back to England: 'I don't know how we made it. The fact that we prayed might have had something to do with it.'

The Fortress *Southern Comfort* limped back, and the Associated Press headline to the story telling about the trip says, 'American Crew Gets Bomber Back from Raid with Prayer.'

She had a hole four feet wide torn out of her main rudder by shrapnel, and her wings were pockmarked with jagged holes. The cowlings of her number 3 engine had a tear a foot long, and she was dribbling oil when she landed, like an overdressed French salad.

She was torn inside and out. A twenty-millimeter shell had sliced through her nose compartment and started to cut through the steel helmet of the navigator, Lieutenant James Moberly, of Moberly, Missouri. The force of the impact jammed Moberly's head down on his desk so hard that it split the desk — but it didn't hurt the navigator.

About that time the tail gunner, a lad by the name of

Frank Hilsbeck who comes from McCook, Nebraska, was getting his own surprise. A shell ripped into one side of the tail, missed his back by a few inches, and shot out the other side of the tail.

Sergeant Stephen Krucher of Merrick, Long Island, had just been discharged after a month in the hospital as a result of his last raid. His first engagement after coming out of the hospital was a strenuous welcome back to his job. A hot anti-aircraft shell fragment cut through his pants leg, and then bounced off a cigarette case he was carrying in his pocket.

A big sharp chunk of flak tore up through the floor of the Fortress a few inches behind the seat of Lieutenant 'Big' Adams. But it kept right on going out through the top turret, never touching the gunner, but pausing on its way to split the oxygen tank. The men were knocked out for a few minutes from lack of oxygen, but the co-pilot, Henry McMurray, seized control of the plane while Big Adams used his last moment of consciousness to grab an emergency oxygen bottle and sniff himself back to normal.

You can see they're not sissies, those boys, and when they say they prayed, you can be sure it's no whining kind of prayer. I imagine it's the kind of prayer that warms God's heart, and makes Him glad he made such people.

For sheer thrills there's probably never been a plane story to surpass the mad tale told officially by the British Air Ministry, about a ship that wouldn't stay down.

The men who lived through it, call it, with British understatement, 'a minor miracle.'

To begin with, she had bombed a U-boat from a very low level — so low, in fact, that though she was racing along at two hundred miles per hour, she couldn't clear the explosion. Her bomb must have struck fair and square on the conning tower, for the explosion was so

sudden and tremendous that it blew the huge Liberator fully three hundred feet into the air. The plane was immediately out of control, and Flying Officer David M. Sleep, in charge, said to himself: 'This is it, son. We'll land on our backs now and plunge into the sea.'

But on the heels of that thought came that thing called 'presence of mind,' that worn-smooth phrase which in itself is an acknowledgment of something beyond ordinary human ability. . . . Hardly knowing that he was speaking, Sleep yelled to the second pilot, '*Push!*'

The second pilot, Sergeant Samuel Patton, a lad from Belfast who had been on only one operational flight before this one, began shoving like mad. Then, actually after their muscles had responded to this command from that 'presence of mind,' the men realized why they were pushing against the control columns. The plane had leaped in the explosion and had turned up her nose into an almost vertical climb. She was tearing straight up the stairs, quite out of control.

'It was like heaving against a brick wall,' said Sleep afterward. 'To begin with, the thing wouldn't move. We braced our hands and knees against the columns — we yelled for the other members of the crew to run forward, to get the weight all in the front of the plane. Finally we got the nose down.'

But she still went on climbing, a little at a time, even though she was more or less level. Before they got back their breath from the explosion and this mad dash upward, Flight Sergeant Johnson shouted out from the tail: 'Our elevators have gone, sir. I can't get out of the turret.'

'Bang your way out, boy,' Officer Sleep shouted back to him. 'Nobody's got time to help you.'

Nobody, in fact, had time to do anything beyond the

immediate job he was tussling with. The two pilots were still wrestling with the columns, which seemed demoniacally determined to lean back and take the ship higher and higher.

In spite of all their frantic situation they wondered quite naturally what harm they had done to the submarine. 'I'd like to see what the score was, sir,' somebody shouted to Sleep.

'Can't go back now,' Sleep said. Then his own curiosity got the best of him. 'We're still flying, aren't we?' he said to himself recklessly. 'Well, then, why don't we go back and have a look at that U-boat?'

'Hey, Sam — let's turn her around. Might as well see the sights,' he said to the second pilot between his teeth.

So, although they were eight hundred and fifty miles from land, they turned the insane ship around and made a wide tilting circle back to the scene. But all they could find of the submarine was a thick column of blue smoke rising like a painted pillar about two hundred feet above the water.

'Worth going back to look at,' they said, and then they bent their backs into the struggle again. Base seemed far away, and it became more and more clear that they were in bad trouble.

The rear gunner was smashing his way out of the jammed turret, and the tail gunner was scrambling around throwing out of the plane anything he could lay his hands on. Anything to make the tail lighter, so that heaven-pointing nose would weigh down!

'I heaved overboard everything that would move,' Flight Sergeant Ronald Johnson said. 'I threw out ammunition belts, heavy equipment, and everything. I even tried to jettison the rear turret, but it wouldn't go. We looked as if we had already had a wreck inside the old Liberator — holes all over the fuselage, oil pouring out over everything — most of the elevators gone —

even our two dinghies had been whipped away like scraps of paper when the explosion came. The débris had blown around like autumn leaves in a gutter.

Flight Engineer Lenson was trying to repair the hydraulic pipeline. But he dropped that job, which was hopeless anyway, when Captain Sleep called out to him, 'Get those extra bombs away.' There were two extra bombs which the submarine hadn't accommodated. 'Get 'em thrown overboard,' Sleep said.

Then Sleep listened for the familiar 'Bombs gone, sir.' But the usual echo which meant his order had been carried out didn't come. For it wasn't as simple as all that. The electrical system used for releasing the bombs was hopelessly smashed.

Lenson looked the situation over, and he got a little pale.

'Bombs away!' Sleep shouted again.

'Just a minute, sir.'

There was a narrow catwalk only a foot wide, and it was swimming so deep with oil that it didn't seem possible that a man could creep out on it and release the bombs by hand.

Lenson ventured out. With the bomb doors open there was nothing between him and the sea ten thousand feet below. The catwalk wasn't even level, for that devilish plane was still climbing up a hill.

He crawled back inside the plane and took off his shoes, thinking that maybe he could get a better grip with his toes.

Meantime, up in the nose, they were still wrestling with the columns. They lashed them forward to the instrument panel with torn pieces of their shirts, to lessen the strain on the pilots. But the plane kept climbing.

It was getting dark now, and the four stout engines throbbed along lustily, apparently the only parts of the

aircraft undamaged. Suddenly the electrical system, which had been completely wrecked, began playing tricks. The heating fans went into action even though the switches were at the 'off' mark.

An hour and a half had passed since Captain Sleep had mentioned the bombs. He had practically forgotten them, with everything else he had on his mind. But then there was a hoarse mutter, up from behind his back. A mumble which Sleep couldn't quite catch.

'What's that?' he said.

The flight engineer, perspiring at every pore, and covered with oil, crawled in through the open bomb bay doors and flopped on the floor.

'Bombs gone, sir,' he said. An hour and a half he had grappled at those huge bombs with his bare hands, balancing on that slippery foot-wide catwalk which was swinging like a trapeze fourteen thousand feet above the sea.

Now they were getting back over land again, and it was time to decide whether or not the crew should bail out or take their chances in the belly-landing which was inevitable.

Each man decided for himself; each man stayed with the ship.

'Cheerio, then,' the Captain said, and he throttled back his engine. Without the lift from the motors, the nose began gently to drop.

They went over the aerodrome twice; the first time they were so high landing was impossible. The second circuit nearly did them in. As they skimmed over the aerodrome boundary at a hundred and forty miles an hour, something snapped in the controls and the stick went dead. It flopped back limply against their bodies, the most ghastly feeling a pilot can experience.

Out of control now, the ship struck a landing light and crashed with a terrific wallop. She slithered over

the ground, kicking up a swirl of *débris*. Then there was an uncanny silence, and pitch darkness, and a tongue of flame flickered around looking for trouble.

Through the escape hatch two wireless operators were flung clear, as if they had been puppets jerked out by a string. The rest of the crew were out in a second, every one of them forgetting about himself and dragging somebody else out. But they didn't get out a minute too soon, for the cockpit went up in flames almost immediately.

But the men — the men who recognized a 'minor miracle' when they saw one — were safe.

One of the common everyday miracles of this war is the removing of the first syllable from the word 'impossible.' General Arnold's audacious slogan for the American Volunteer Fliers in China says it well: 'The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer.'

Men of action who dramatize such slogans by their daily deeds never have a great deal to say. But their very expectation of superhuman strength is an unspoken acknowledgment of something beyond human ability. In their deeds they call upon that something, and this in itself is a prayer.

A magnificent story which illustrates this is told in a British Air Ministry news bulletin. It happened at the end of 1942, when the air over Egypt was strategic territory. From this high point the enemy was able to photograph freely, and much vitally important military information was open to them unless their reconnaissance planes could be kept off.

There are two heroes in the story — a British Spitfire, and a man from Kenya named Reynolds. Both of the heroes had handicaps against them; for winning an argument with the German planes the Spitfire didn't

have quite the altitude necessary, and Reynolds didn't have quite the youth.

Reynolds was an old man, in fact. Forty, which is practically senile, according to the youngsters of the R.A.F. And besides, he had never gone through the instruction training of the R.A.F. But he had had a plane of his own, which he had used around East Africa to cover his 'territory,' for he was a salesman.

The other test pilots — brash youngsters, most of them — at first were pretty superior and condescending about Reynolds. But he was a nice old man, and before they knew it, they were fond of him — and then they were jealous about what he could do, for in all his flying he never so much as scratched one aircraft. First they thought he was a joke, and then they were jealous — but finally they were proud as the dickens of him.

In those days the British were having a lot of worry from the German long-range reconnaissance planes, the Junkers 86's, which had been designed to fly in the stratosphere. These planes with their enormous wing span and their powerful engines had been designed to rise above the ceiling of any existing fighter. So the upper air belonged to them, uncontested. They could fly around at a leisurely two hundred m.p.h., taking all the valuable photographs they pleased, while the men below had to squirm with their feet chained to the ground, unable to do much to change the situation.

But one morning, Reynolds and two youngsters named Genders and Gold were standing on the tarmac of their aerodrome, gazing up and cursing their helplessness. Parallel vapor trails in the sky showed just what the high-flying enemy was doing, and it certainly burned up the men on the ground.

'How far up do you think she is?' Genders said angrily.

'Forty thousand at least,' old man Reynolds muttered.

They kicked up the ground impotently, not saying anything more. But a wild, daring thought was skyrocketing across Reynolds' mind. The yawning front of a big hangar was open, and inside they could hear fitters working on two Spitfires.

The eyes of the pilots met, and suddenly the youngsters knew what the old man had been thinking.

'What'd you think? Shall we try it?' he said.

'Sure. But . . .'

But already Reynolds was striding over to the Station Commander. In a half-dozen words he told him what he wanted to do. The Commander shook his head, but Reynolds insisted.

'Besides, the medical chaps wouldn't let you go,' the Commander said after he had exhausted the other arguments.

'You leave them to me,' Reynolds said, and he started out to battle down the second hindrance. They pointed out to him how dangerous such high flying could be — even if you could get a Spitfire to go up that high.

'Sorry, old chap,' they said, 'but nobody except a man in the utter pink — nobody but a boy — could stand it.'

An ascent above thirty-five thousand feet is a brush with death for any man should the oxygen supply be intercepted. Higher than that there must ensue a fight to retain consciousness. Paralysis attacks the legs and arms. The stomach is blown up like a balloon, and becomes unbearably painful. Finally there is that most dread penalty of height, 'the bends.' They tried to describe this to Reynolds — the excruciating pain in the joints, shoulders, elbows, knees, and ankles.

He listened until they had finished.

'Righto,' he said. 'So what?'

So at last he won them over, and official approval was finally stamped on his orders. Meantime the maintenance crew on the aerodrome had been working on

his Spitfire, to give it the height which hadn't been built into it.

The first day he went up — way up — the youngsters stood around on the ground cussing and cheering — and praying. They almost burst their eyeballs trying to see what was happening upstairs. At last up above forty thousand feet the dot that was Reynolds began chasing the Ju. 86. The Junkers, who had had it all his own way for quite a while, just couldn't believe it was happening to him. But the Spitfire crowded him out to sea, closer and closer until he was right on the German tail. Then he opened fire with his cannon and the starboard engine of the Junkers caught fire, and it twisted into a dive and disappeared in the haze.

Nothing could keep the youngsters on the ground after that. The fitting crews on the Spitfires got into the competition also. They worked night and day trying to get yet greater height into their metal darlings.

The high sky became a battlefield now, and when a Junkers 86 appeared, the ground beneath became electrified into angry action.

Once Genders was chasing an enemy out to sea as fast as he could go, when suddenly he realized that his petrol was running low. Only five gallons left, in fact. But he closed up for the final grips, and he punctured the pressure cabin and forced the Ju. 86 down. Then, because he was so short of petrol himself he had to drop out of the fight.

But Gold was now within range. In a few minutes it became a dogfight proper, high up over the Mediterranean. Gold's Spitfire was fast, but the Ju. 86 was maneuverable.

Gold got him at last and shot him to pieces. When he got back to the aerodrome, he found that he, too, was nearly out of petrol — only two gallons left.

They didn't know what had become of Genders.

When Gold had seen him last he had been trying to glide home. From forty-five thousand feet a plane can glide a long way, and they thought he would probably make it. But days and days passed, and Genders didn't get back. The 'old man' and the kid were pretty grieved about him; he had been a great lad, and they needed him. . . .

Then one day a strange-looking sight came limping up to the aerodrome. A native, wearing a galabieh wrapped grotesquely about his long-legged frame. He had on dark glasses, too, and that was one reason his friends didn't recognize him. But it was Genders, all right, a little the worse for wear, but still himself, and still full of fight.

He had tried to make the long glide over the Mediterranean, and he had thought for a while he was going to come in on the slope. There had been a moment when he had passed over two small ships, and he could easily have bailed out and fired his distress flares, which would have given him a pretty good chance of being picked up. But he decided to continue gliding, in the hope that he could save his valuable Spitfire.

But he just couldn't make it after all. When he was still forty miles from the coast, his plane was only a thousand feet above the sea. He had to fall out about one o'clock in the afternoon. He swam doggedly all afternoon, all that night, and the next morning—twenty-one hours.

By the direction of the wind, which is generally offshore, he kept himself headed in the right direction, and once he actually spotted the Egyptian coast. But then the Nile stream picked him up and carried him out to sea again. Genders, however, is the kind of lad who doesn't give up, so he swam weakly on until at last he walked ashore, to the blinking amazement of two Egyptian gentlemen shooting ducks.

His clothes were completely rotted by the sea. His eyes were pretty painful from the salt water. But other than that he had no ill effects from his long immersion.

Meanwhile the Junkers upstairs were still at it. The battle for height was still raging, and a Ju. 86, bolder than the rest, had now taken to flying up to nearly fifty thousand feet.

Reynolds, the tough old man, out-heighted by five thousand feet, came down with fire in his eye.

'Whatever you do to put the height in that motor of mine, you've got to do a little more of it,' he said to the mechanics.

'She won't take any more, sir,' they said, and they tried to explain the mechanics to him.

'She'll take it,' he said. 'You give her everything you've got on the ground and I'll give her everything I've got in the air.' Grimly the mechanics went back to work.

When they had finished, Reynolds went up again, over the forty-five thousand mark, right behind the Junkers.

Up there the temperature in the cockpit fell to sixty-seven degrees below zero. The instruments, control column, and Perspex all became coated with ice. Reynolds, fighting faintness and nausea, was almost blind from weakness and pain. But he struggled on, until suddenly the enemy loomed up before him less than a hundred yards away. Reynolds tried to fire his guns, but his arms were paralyzed, and the German, grinning probably, turned out to sea.

Reynolds had been up at the excruciating height for more than an hour, but nevertheless he followed the Junkers out over the Mediterranean. His hands were so frozen that he had to steer the Spitfire by manipulating his weight. But he tagged along, and finally he freed his hands enough to go into real combat action. Almost

unconscious, he kept attacking until he finally knocked down the plane. Then he turned for home.

There wasn't enough fuel for anything but gliding. He was eight or nine miles up, and as he turned home he saw something which few people have ever seen. Over his shoulder he could look down on the whole of the Aegean Sea, with Crete lying like a pebble in a pond.

On his right he could see beyond Benghazi into the Gulf of Sidra, and on his left, over the entire length of Palestine to the mountains of Lebanon. The Egyptian coast seemed to be only a hand's breadth away, but it was a thousand miles distant. In one glance the length of the Suez Canal was revealed from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea.

He got back home three hours after the sea-rescue boats had been sent out to look for him.

'What kept you, Pop?' the youngsters asked.

'Official business, my little man,' he said.

Then the three of them flung their arms around each other's shoulders, and chuckled.

When the Air Ministry gave Reynolds the Distinguished Flying Cross, it was the youngsters who wrote home about it. Boasting.

Two Teaspoonfuls of Courage —

MEN IN A SUBMARINE live a tight life, in that locked narrow steel-clad universe of theirs under the sea. They have no secrets from each other; what happens to one of them happens to all. When one has a grouch, they all feel glum; when one has a pain, it racks them all.

'Gosh, you don't think it's appendicitis, do you?' they ask hoarsely. For of all the emergencies anticipated on a submarine, an attack of acute appendicitis has always been the one most feared. Somewhere down the list, among all the hypothetical wondering which has occupied their bull sessions, appendicitis used to loom as something ghastly to imagine.

'What in heck do you suppose we'd do?' they used to ask each other morbidly.

But they don't wonder any more. They know now. They would operate. It happened; so now they know all about it.

A submarine doesn't have a doctor, so the men must be picked for perfect health. One of the rosiest lads on the *Silversides* was fireman George W. Platter, who is twenty-one years old and comes from Buffalo. If George had any ailment at all, it was exuberant appetite, for he certainly loved to eat. And the food on a submarine

is as good as the Navy can make it, with home-made cake and fried chicken and plenty of steaks, and a twenty-four-hour open icebox free and easy and always full of cheese and peanut butter and jam.

The other boys used to rib George about it. 'No wonder your name's Platter,' they used to say, and out of that schoolboyish pun came a lot of their bum jokes.

One morning, George had a tummyache. 'And why shouldn't you have?' they said jovially, 'After what was served up on that Platter last night.'

But this was a different kind of tummyache. This had frills on it — fever and a fluttery pulse. He reported it to the Captain in charge of the sub, who had First Class Pharmacist's Mate Thomas Moore take a look at him.

Moore, who was only twenty-three himself, had seen a lot of tummyaches. And he had also seen about two thousand appendectomies performed at the San Diego Naval Hospital, where he had trained. But, of course, he had never held a scalpel himself, and he wasn't aiming to, if he could help it.

All day long everybody on the submarine worried about Platter; everybody tried to persuade him he was feeling better, but they knew he wasn't. By night, the men who were squeamish couldn't eat their own dinners, and they wished rather sickly that they were anywhere else on earth than shut up where they were, with this beastly business getting nearer and nearer to inevitable.

The only one who really wasn't worried was George himself. George was too uncomfortable to be worried; he had that strange indifferent lassitude which is one symptom of acute illness.

Moore reported to Commander Roy M. Davenport that there wasn't much choice about it; he'd have to operate.

'My God, son, do you know where we are?' Commander Davenport said.

'Wherever we are,' Moore said, 'Platter's got only a few hours more before that thing bursts. We'll have to take it out.'

'We couldn't be nearer to the highway to Tokio,' Commander Davenport said.

'Okay, then, so that's where we are,' Moore said steadily. 'Let's get at it.'

Commander Davenport and young Moore, both pretty pale and tight around the lips, told the rest of the officers and men that they'd have to operate. 'They' was undoubtedly the word, and it included every one of them.

'We'll submerge first,' the Captain said. Everyone stood by, while the 'Christmas tree,' the electric indicator board, glowed with red and green lights indicating the hull openings and valves.

Meantime, they had put George's pajama coat on him backward, and had laid him on the wardroom mess table, which was only about three by five feet. The wardroom itself was only about as big as a hotel bathroom, but so crowded with apparatus that a man couldn't stand up straight in it.

By ten-fifteen Moore was ready. He had his equipment laid out, two Navy surgery knives, eight clamps, a couple of thumb forceps, and plenty of sterile goods. At the last minute he realized that his kit contained no retractors, so he took two teaspoons and bent them like wishbones to hold back the muscles after he had made his incision.

Just before he gave George the spinal anesthetic, Commander Davenport bent over the boy.

'How d' you feel, son?'

'I feel great,' George said with trembling lips.

A youngster in the crowd said huskily: 'Well, change places with me then, George. I feel awful.'

They all did the best they could to laugh at that, and then Captain Davenport said, 'How about praying, son?'

'I am praying,' George said. 'Best way I know how.'

'That's fine, then. And we'll pray right along with you.'

'I don't know just what to say, sir,' one boyish voice piped up.

Commander Davenport thought a few minutes, and then he said: 'The Forty-Sixth Psalm has helped a lot of people. I don't remember all of it, but one verse says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble!"'

'Yeah, I'll say that,' George said. 'I'll kind of hold on to that. Okay, Tom, let's go.'

So Moore took a big breath, and made the incision. The tiny clatter of the instruments, the horrible thought of the cut flesh, and not a man in the room breathing. Moore's hands were as steady as iron and it seemed as if he had forgotten everything in the world but this slow unfamiliar work. He couldn't hurry; he didn't know how. He moved like a man in a slow-motion picture, tying off and clipping a little at a time, and never knowing when the boys dabbed the perspiration from his face.

It took him an hour and twenty minutes even to find the appendix. The white-faced boys standing by thought maybe the guy didn't *have* any appendix — or worse, maybe Doc, as they now had begun calling him in their minds, didn't know one when he saw it. Moore had a big Navy flashlight, and he was probing with its beam down inside the incision, slow and careful as if he had all the time in the world.

But at last he spoke.

'There she is,' he said, 'by golly, that's her, all right.'

But the appendix had grown to the ascending colon, and it didn't look like a simple matter to cut it away.

Besides, George was beginning to wriggle his toes now, for the spinal anesthetic was wearing off.

'Listen, I hate to tell you,' he mumbled, 'but you guys are hurting me something awful.'

Captain Davenport bent over him and tried to talk to him. One of the seamen pushed forward. 'Listen, buddy, I just happened to think of a funny story,' he said in a kind of croak. 'How about me telling it? Well, once there was a guy had an apple pie . . .'

George tried to listen, and he tried to laugh, but he couldn't manage it. 'How about that Bible verse?' he muttered. 'Tell me that again, sir.' So Captain Davenport said the words again. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'

Meantime they had rigged up an ether cone from some gauze and a tea strainer, and they let a can and a half of ether trickle through it during the next incredible hours that Moore worked. It took him nearly an hour to cut the appendix away from the colon. Before the thing was finally finished it was three-thirty in the morning, and more than five hours had passed since they had laid Platter on the mess table.

'Only once in the whole five hours did Moore straighten up and seem to take a breath,' Commander Davenport said afterward.

They lifted the still unconscious patient into his own bunk, and the rest of them were ready to flop into theirs, but Commander Davenport said:

'We'll have to surface, boys. We'll have to recharge the batteries.'

The bright electric lights were snapped off, and the red and green lights glowed on the 'Christmas tree,' turning the whole interior of the sub into something

bizarre and theatrical. Water rushed from the ballast tanks, and the sub broke the surface.

The Captain raised the periscope and 'walked it around.' It was just before dawn, with a greenish Japanese sky stretching overhead. Suddenly he froze the periscope, for an enemy vessel was lying alongside, not very far away.

'Stand by to torpedo,' he said crisply. The men, jittery and tense, leaped to attention at their stations. The *Silversides* tiptoed in as close as she dared, got a complete look with her periscope, and then hastily dived.

The torpedomen stood by their posts, and then the Captain said:

'Stand by to fire torpedoes. Fire one . . . Fire two . . .'

There was a slight shivering crunch as the torpedoes left their racks, the one the men had named for a movie starlet, and the other which the torpedoman had named for his wife. Then an eternity of waiting, with no sound but the purring of the motors and the long sob of the water. Then the explosion — a sharp crack like a whip.

Now the enemy was throwing depth charges, and the sub, with its precious patient held in his bunk by tender strong hands, shook and jumped. The enemy dropped depth charges for several hours, and all the time Moore himself stood right by George's bunk; the operation had been a success, and Moore wasn't going to have the patient be a failure. Certainly not because of anything the Japs could do.

But the patient, from that minute until the sub got back to base, was a huge success. He bounced back during the next few days like a superman, and in eight days he was up and about his duties, as fresh as a daisy and frisky as an eel, and the pet of everybody.

Old *Silversides* herself seemed to be feeling her oats after the ghastly adventure, for she sank several enemy ships before she finally headed home.

Moore is now a full-fledged Chief Pharmacist's Mate, and George Platter, too, received a citation and a promotion. George's proudest decoration, however, he wears rather intimately on his person, and with the slightest encouragement he'll jerk up his jacket and show it.

But under all that boyish pride is a sober gratitude to God. All the men in that sub felt the presence of that Psalm very deeply. Commander Davenport, who is the most articulate, said: 'I know the Divine Presence helped carry us through that operation. It was only through Divine protection that we were able to complete it.'

A Woman Protects a Man

THE HISTORY of a whole nation may once have been changed by an obscure Bible verse. The verse is in Jeremiah 31, so little known that I doubt very much if any sermons ever have used it for their text.

It came about in a dramatic way. The great leader of a country which was struggling up from disorganization, revolution, and the chaos of poverty and ignorance was once kidnapped and held prisoner by mutinous men under him.

So unheard-of and audacious was this kidnapping that the entire world held its breath awaiting the outcome. It was reported almost from the start that the leader would not escape alive; in fact, some sources said that he had already been assassinated.

This great leader had a beautiful wife who was a devout Bible student. As soon as her husband was captured, she sent word to her mother saying: 'Something very bad is happening. I cannot tell you what it is, but please pray for us.'

Within a few hours, her mother sent back this message — only a Bible verse: 'The enemy shall retire of his own accord.'

The wife took the words to heart, even though they seemed almost too miraculous to be believed, for the

enemy was strong, and he certainly showed no symptoms of retiring of his own accord.

She knew that her husband had tried conscientiously to understand the Bible for her sake, for that had been one of the conditions on which she had consented to marry him. But up to this time he had not understood it as she did, nor relied upon it. But she prayed that the ordeal might turn him to God, and this is what happened in answer to her prayers.

He wrote an account of it in his diary:

'From my captors I asked but one thing — the Bible. The greatness and love of Christ burst upon me with a new inspiration, increasing my strength to struggle against evil. My strength was redoubled and . . . I was prepared to make the final sacrifice. . . . I was comforted and at rest. . . .'

His one fear while he was being held captive was that his wife might also be lured into the hands of his enemy. He tried to get word back to his government to protect her, but the word was intercepted.

Meantime, fortified by the Bible verse, she came down to the city where her husband was being held prisoner. One of their loyal supporters came with her, and she gave this man a loaded revolver with instructions that if her husband's abductors should attempt to seize her, she was to be shot instantly.

When they arrived at the city, she was met by the kidnapper, obviously intending to abduct her as he had taken her husband. But she was armed with the verse her mother had sent her, and she believed it to be a divine message.

'Before you take me to see my husband, let us dine together,' she said, smiling graciously.

Almost to her own surprise, her fearlessness and trust completely disarmed him, and he allowed her to be taken to see her husband quite freely. This was indeed

the first step of the 'enemy retiring of his own accord.'

When she entered the room where the leader was being held, she found him reading the Scriptures. He was ill and injured, but he scarcely seemed aware of it, for with deep emotion he showed her an illumined verse which he had discovered that morning.

Jehovah will now do a new thing, and that is, He will make a woman protect a man.

He was much moved by this verse, for he interpreted it to be a foretelling of the way his wife would save him. And more than this, he interpreted it to mean the supremacy of the Golden Rule over the force of enmity, and the winsomeness of virtue as being finally superior to the power of military might. Indeed in that instance it had been proved so, for the gentle woman had right of way where military might had been unavailing.

He understood it also to mean more than just the saving of his own personal life. It was, for him, a prophetic outline of the saving of his whole people by the qualities of wisdom and gentleness and goodness which seemed embodied in his Christian wife.

Together they said prayers and read Psalms to each other, and from that moment, according to the diary of this great leader, his whole outlook changed. 'This spirit remains with us now, and reaches to the skies,' he says.

Within the next few days a history-making coup d'état was achieved out of what had looked like certain defeat for this leader and his party. The enemies who had captured him and who intended to overthrow him utterly became his devoted followers.

Their remorse was abject. Out in the world news was being awaited with terrific suspense. But when the word came that the leader was released, no one could quite understand what had happened. Several books and

many articles have been written trying to explain it. But it remains one of the 'mysteries of goodness.' Human intelligence never can understand this ancient phenomenon, when what appears to be good, though weak, overcomes what seems powerful and evil.

The country was united as it never had been, and now stands to the whole world as a symbol of virtues which are considered predominately Christian ones. This is all the more remarkable because the country is not a Christian country. It is, in fact, China.

The leader and his wife are, of course, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek and the beloved Mai-ling Soong. This incident happened in 1936, at Sian, and marked the end of the violent civil wars which were destroying China, and preventing her from resisting her real enemy, Japan.

General Chiang's inspired verse has proved to be as prophetic during the past seven years as it had seemed to him in his vision. Indeed the whole world has felt the gentle, saving touch of Madame Chiang, and some of the noblest words spoken about this war have come from the woman whose country has suffered the most cruelly from it. With all she has endured, she was able to warn the world against the hideousness of hating—even Japan.

The influence of Christianity on China is prodigious, and yet only one per cent of the Chinese are actually Christians. However, as *Time Magazine* (March 8, 1943) points out, "'Who's Who in China" shows that one out of every six Chinese leaders is a Christian; one out of every two has been educated in Christian schools or colleges.'

Doctor Henry Pitney Van Dusen of Union Theological Seminary is quoted by *Time Magazine* as saying, 'Perhaps more than any other influence, Christianity is

responsible for the extraordinary character of China's resistance. . . .'

The Generalissimo, who has been called Christianity's most famous convert, has stated his faith eloquently on a number of occasions. He prays daily, the first thing every morning; he says grace before all meals; and he interprets the Bible literally as a guide to his own behavior, both political and personal. He says: 'Without religion there can be no real understanding of life. Without faith, our human problems, great and small, are difficult of solution.'

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek describes her own standpoint of faith in a pamphlet issued by the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church. In part, she says:

'Life is really simple, and yet how confused we make it. In old Chinese art there is just one outstanding object — perhaps a flower, on a scroll. Everything else in the picture is subordinate to that one beautiful thing.

'An integrated life is like that. What is that one flower? As I see it now, it is the will of God. But to know His will, and do it, calls for absolute sincerity, absolute honesty with one's self, and it means using one's mind to the best of one's ability.'

One of Madame Chiang's most outstanding characteristics is this great 'presence of mind,' which she uses winningly. She spoke extemporaneously before the United States Senate, and received one of the biggest ovations ever given in the Senate for her eloquence. The press got out adjectives seldom used before to describe her, at her various conferences and appearances across the country.

A wake of press comment follows her, which mentions religion and God and spirituality as familiarly as other celebrities call out controversy, or compliments or personal descriptions. It is impossible to write frivolously

about this great woman; when men write of her, they write unavoidably of 'whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report.' To quote but one of the hundreds, Dave Boone, the *New York Sun's* popular columnist, said on its front page, 'Her view on prayer should be read by all folks who think a quick, short, hurried, and formalized petition to God is sufficient.'

Of herself she says: 'With me religion is a very simple thing; it means to try with all my heart and soul and strength and mind to do the will of God.'

Because of her consecration to all things good, her very shadow falls like a blessing on print as on event.

Hand in the Sky

EVENTS don't happen; we cause them.' We are so sure of that, we humans, that we have become a bit arrogant about it. The intelligent, powerful men are the ones who 'cause events'; weaklings are those at the mercy of happenings.

The very laws of the universe we take as a challenge. As soon as we tortuously wrest these laws from the massed mystery of ignorance, we harness them to our will and our purposes. Those we do not like, we seek to annul by finding some other law more powerful and clenching them together for our benefit. In all this we call ourselves inventors, forgetting we are only humble discoverers.

But there is one department in which we cannot order events. However much we have taken into our hands, this remains beyond our touch. Whether we like it or not, we have to take whatever comes. In that realm we cannot bring about events, nor can we prevent them. We can only put up grotesquely comical umbrellas, so to speak, of one kind or another.

For, however much authority we have appropriated in every other field, the weather remains God's business.

By meteorology and climatology, we try meekly to fit our plans with His. That's the best we can do. But

sometimes, when He has chosen to do so, He has made sport of our most skilful scientific findings.

In times of war, weather is not quite the irrelevant whim and caprice it may be at other times. Weather in wartime is one of the most powerful weapons, both offensive and defensive. Weather has won battles, and lost them, and military men — and history itself — have had to accept the verdict.

No less a militarist than Napoleon was largely undone by a weather reversal, for he was too much of an amateur in weather strategy to foresee how decisive a rain could be.

Napoleon echoed that cosmic cynicism which often prognosticates defeat, 'God is on the side of the heaviest battalions.' But Napoleon forgot to reckon with the unseen battalions behind the clouds. With this handicap against him, all the other factors seemed to gang up on him, and the battle stretched out into ultimate defeat. In his arrogance he forgot completely that weather is a fighting force and that it belongs exclusively to God.

Napoleon intended to begin the battle of Waterloo at six in the morning and hoped to finish it off by two. Wellington could not win without Blücher, and Blücher could not possibly bring his help until five o'clock. Napoleon had it all worked out by the clock, and it was all on his side.

The clock did its part, but the weather balked. For all night long a teeming rain came down and softened the ground so that Napoleon's artillery was mud-bound. Those 'battalions' behind the clouds combined with all the other battalions which were opposing him, and the outcome was history.

We do not make Napoleon's mistake now. Generals work side by side with meteorologists. Weather is important, secret strategy, so vital an instrument of war

that in our military program the Joint Welfare Central, staffed by trained personnel of the Army, the Navy, and the Weather Bureau, is one of the most important coordinating forces.

Weather has become one of the prime dimensions in every war plan, and you may be sure that no skill or expense is spared in analyzing or forecasting. No strategy, however minor, however major, is drawn up without the approval of meteorological experts and statisticians. Indeed, J. Henry Weber, meteorologist for the *New York Times*, goes so far as to say, 'The more you study this war, the more you realize that in all its main outlines and much of its detail, it follows a pattern drawn by climate, the seasons, and the weather.'

Naturally, this is also true of the enemy's strategy. Hitler understood the importance of weather long ago. As early as 1933 he established a research institute under Doctor Franz Baur at Frankfurt-am-Main where ten-day forecasts were published. This represented a new expectation of precision, for up to that time five-day forecasts were usually considered satisfactory.

When Norway was taken by Germany, it was said that one thing the enemy wanted was Narvik's far-northern weather-observation posts. Weather for Europe is 'made' in Norway, and Hitler wanted to keep his eye on the factory. He could watch its output and make his scientific guesses about it. But he couldn't control it. Nobody can do that.

The meteorological story of this war started to unfold in September, 1939, when Hitler's armored divisions rolled into Poland. Remembering how heavy rains and soft ground had hamstrung the German advance against Russia in 1914, Hitler was determined that nothing of the sort should happen to the Nazis in 1939. He waited for the green light on the weather maps, and then his motorized cavalry stormed across dry terrain, during a

month in which normally some rains would be expected to fall. It wasn't just luck or good guessing; it was good meteorology.

Later, in April, 1940, when he moved into Norway, it was at a time when he knew that the mountainous terrain would be in fairly good condition. And at that time, he also knew that foul weather would impede and tie up the British troopships. His attack on Holland and Belgium was also well timed for dry weather.

And yet, in spite of all scientific carefulness, there have been weather reverses which changed the course of events. That is past denying.

When mistakes are made in predicting war weather, it is not like a miss made by the local weather man which ruins a picnic. If meteorological errors do occur in war, it is certainly not from any carelessness or superficiality of observation. It is because something suddenly changed the rules and broke the laws. The men whose lives have been saved by unpredictable weather events have a different way of expressing it. They say God changed His mind.

It is too early to say how often this has happened. Events come thundering down at us so fast and furiously that much data has not yet been assembled. But there are some occurrences so huge and unmistakable that already they have found their place in news dispatches, and even in headlines.

Dunkirk, of course, is one. The weather story of Dunkirk is so beloved by the British, from the children to the generals, that it will no doubt become one of the almost-holy legends which make up a nation's heart line in literature and art and religion. It has been told singularly little in the American press; mostly we know of it here by rumor, and letter, and by earnest conversation.

But the record covers columns of newsprint in British

newspapers. The London *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* calls one of its accounts of it 'The story of the two wonders — violent storm and channel calm.'

That, in a word, was the miracle. A land storm which protected the hundreds of thousands of men of the B.E.F. from being bombed any worse than they were from the air, and immediately following, a sea calm which permitted the hundreds of little boats to take men from the beaches. Two weather coincidences, so strange and unaccountable that they almost defy belief — except that they happened and that four hundred thousand people witnessed the phenomenon.

On those two contradictory circumstances pivoted the fate of the whole army, and indeed of the nation and the future of all of us.

The roads through Flanders were alive with soldiers and refugees. The German planes flew low overhead and strafed them with machine guns. For the first two days it was such hell as cannot be pictured. Then a storm came over the country and clouds hung so low that the planes dared not fly.

A newspaper story headlined 'Shielded by Cloud' quotes a Sherwood Foresters' lieutenant as he passed with his regiment through Nottingham. 'We saw no German sky raiders because a heavy dark cloud settled over our heads not five hundred feet above, and soon it was raining hard. We embarked without air raids, again thanks to bad weather, the port earlier having been bombed in a mass air attack.'

In the London *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* I find a paragraph which reads almost like epic poetry. 'So the two miracles made possible what seemed impossible. In the darkness of the storm and the violence of the rain, formations which were eight to twelve miles from Dunkirk were able to move up on foot to the coast with scarcely any interruption from aircraft, for air-

craft were unable to operate in such turbulent conditions.'

You cannot read the newspaper accounts of this without remembering the 'pillar of cloud by day.' You try to recall where that comes from, that phrase. Shakespeare? Milton? Then you remember that it is the Bible, and with a prickle down your spine you think of that old Bible story of the children of Israel fleeing also from captivity, and it seems to you that the stories are twins.

So, under the 'pillar of cloud by day' nearly four hundred thousand men made their way to the sea. But when they reached the sea, it was so tempestuous that there was little hope that boats could come in near enough to pick them up. There were no proper docks for landing, because of the previous bombing; big boats couldn't come into the harbor, because of the sunk craft blocking it. So the little boats would have to come as close as they dared to the beaches and the men would have to wade out as far as they could. But in the storm this looked more than impossible.

A heavy-weather system was in the Atlantic, moving north. England, grimly praying, watched it despairingly. If it moved even an inch to the east, it would raise such a sea that the little boats never could ply across the channel to the beaches.

But then the storm passed to the north along the west coast of Ireland. Only the outermost edge of its secondary fanned across the Channel. But even this edge was fatal on the beaches of Dunkirk, for it got up a surf and swamped many of the fragile little boats never meant for such going. And it was the last cruel exhaustion to the men who had trudged for days, hungry and sick at heart.

But suddenly, in a way that transcended all reason, a calm came over the sea. John Masefield, telling about

it in his book, *The Nine Days' Wonder*, says, 'The change in the weather raised hope in every heart.'

The glass was steadily rising, and on the twenty-ninth of May the light wind was almost easterly and the surf was gone. Engineers now could start in to improvise piers into the sea. Along what remained of an old break-water, they built frantically, using whatever came to hand, deckings and scantlings and gratings, and even the Army lorries themselves. They were superb sights, those piers, made out of nothing but determination and resourcefulness. The smaller boats came alongside, and the men no longer had to wade out neck deep to climb aboard them.

An anticyclone was now centered over England, and the Channel was as calm as if it was holding its breath as was the rest of the world. A haze lay over everything, and though this was a hindrance to the little rescuing boats, it was even more of a nuisance to the bombing planes swooping over them.

'It is undoubted that there was such a calmness over the whole of the waters of the English Channel for that vital period of days as has rarely been experienced,' writes C. B. Morlock in the *London Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* (June 8, 1940). 'Those who are accustomed to the Channel testify to the strangeness of this calm; they are deeply impressed by the phenomenon of nature by which it became possible for tiny craft to go back and forth to safety.'

Amazingly few of the frail fair-weather craft used in the emergency were damaged. A yacht club on the south coast asked by the Admiralty to mobilize its members said that not one of their little pleasure boats reported a casualty beyond slight damage to woodwork.

Those who could not concede God as a factor in the equation have tried diligently to explain the weather on some scientific grounds. But the men who were

there, like Arthur Divine, who wrote a short article in the *Reader's Digest* (December, 1940), do not quibble about it. They say it outright, without apology: 'God withheld the wind.' And Mr. Divine says furthermore, 'Had we had one onshore breeze of any strength at all in the first days, we would have lost a hundred thousand men.' Mr. Divine is conservative about that; Winston Churchill said frankly after hoping at most for only 20,000 or 30,000 to be saved, that '335,000 men, French and British, were carried out of the jaws of death to the tasks which lie immediately before them.'

So uplifted was the whole nation at that time that people actually *counted* upon the miracle continuing. Ronald Cross, Minister of Shipping, told about a factory at Ramsgate which turned itself wrong side out and sent its workers across the Channel in all kinds of boats.

A foreman leaped upon a cask and made the appeal to his men. 'You are going into hell,' he said quietly. 'You will be bombed and machine-gunned.'

'Aye,' they said soberly.

'Will you fetch back the lads?'

They said nothing at all. They threw down their tools, and turned off their machines, and ran from the factory gates down to ships they had never seen before. They didn't know too much about ships, for they were factory hands, but they set their jaws and went to it, and in twenty minutes they had set sail toward the bomb-ridden waters of Dunkirk.

The long dark lines of men on the beaches waited for them, neck-deep in water. They dragged them aboard. One ship was shelled. She shivered and then she pulled herself together, and the men turned her around and started back to England. There were holes just above the waterline, and they were bad ones. But so long as the sea got no rougher she might make it.

She did make it, and the tired wet soldiers dragged

themselves off at Ramsgate, singing, 'Roll out the barrel' in croaking brave voices.

'You'll have to dock her now,' somebody said. 'She's badly hit.' Her amateur crew, tired and dirty and aching, scrambled out on the dock to have a look at the holes.

'A little swell awash her, and she would go down,' they admitted. Then they looked at each other, and at that strangely calmed Channel whose nasty disposition was such a byword to them.

'She'll make it,' they said. 'God's got His hand on that water.' And without hesitation they turned her around and went back to Dunkirk for another load.

Dunkirk and its miraculous weather belong not exclusively to the men who experienced it. It has become a property of faith — 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' — a terrible and wonderful symbol, to the whole nation and to the world.

A letter of protest against an article in *Headway* (September, 1940), a periodical printed by the League of Nations in London, says: 'That God at Dunkirk answered the people's prayer, is openly acknowledged by ordinary folk, and especially by the soldiers. Surely in addition to the calm seas and rain for which the soldiers prayed on the sands at Dunkirk, there were then released from divine sources superhuman forces of courage, endurance, initiative, and selfless devotion, making heroes of ordinary soldiers, while the arm of God was outstretched in protection.

'No reference to Dunkirk can be historical which omits this aspect.'

Whatever this reversed defeat, this event in history called Dunkirk, means in military parlance, the name of Dunkirk will stand to common people as a synonym of God-with-us, as a talisman for anyone to hold on to in severe extremity.

Even the children knew what Dunkirk meant to the nation. A mother from Wellington, Somersetshire, writing to a friend in America, said:

'Since I last wrote you our home in Southampton has been wrecked. A huge [word eliminated by censor] fell on our lovely tennis court, and blew the back and side of the house in, the roof off, the chimney stacks down, the window panes and all the doors off.

'John, twelve this week, has the greatest faith in God doing miracles since Dunkirk. He thinks whenever invasion seems approaching that high winds, or rains or snow, come along to stop it.'

That anonymous, twelve-year-old John was not wrong in his faith. Unimportant as he is, he becomes significant when multiplied by the millions who also held fast to faith.

For it was a 'providential gale' blowing from the west against the crammed Nazi-held Channel ports which helped to turn back the invasion when it came. The barges were turned over, and thousands — as many as sixty thousand — Germans were reported drowned. And among the huge R.A.F. force which was mercilessly bombing the ports, not one British plane was lost.

There is a question if even now the British people realize the extent to which their childlike trust in God was ultimately justified. It is a thrilling story, the turning back of that invasion. It has not been fully told, nor universally realized. It has frankly been called a 'legend,' but the fact remains that it was reported in newspapers many times from official sources such as the Air Ministry and the British Press Association.

It is easy to understand why the story was not fully told in the week when it happened. That week of September 15, 1940, was such a precarious time that no added ounce of burden could be laid upon it. 'Even now,' said the Air Ministry, as quoted in the *New York*

Sun (October 25), 'the story can only be told in part. Until lately it would have been extremely unwise to let the enemy know how much we knew of his preparations and the effect of the R.A.F. attacks.'

Naturally only time itself could prove that the invasion *had* been turned back instead of being merely postponed. Indeed, it was not until April 20, 1943, that Winston Churchill said that the church bells of England might ring again, and this was his dramatic way of announcing that the invasion danger was over. For those great silver voices had been silenced after Dunkirk, and it was understood that they would ring only in case of invasion.

The full danger was not told, nor the escape from the danger, yet the peril of the moment did override the consideration of secrecy, and Winston Churchill publicly announced in the House of Commons on September 12 that the German invasion plans were far more advanced than the people of England had realized. He told of the great armada of scows, barges, tugs, and steamers 'by the thousands, choking the Nazi-held ports from Norway to Brest.' Some of the barges, he said, were self-propelled, and were fitted to carry tanks. 'These can be regarded only as a prelude to the invasion of Britain,' the Prime Minister admitted with a grave, pale face. 'We must regard the next week or so as one of the most important in our history.'

That week, however, the British weren't just sitting around waiting for the invasion; that was one of the first weeks of the Blitz, and they were rocking back on their heels and scrambling back to balance again.

The Nazi radio comment, taking full advantage of the terror which walked at noonday and at midnight, was blaring away with increased violence, telling how imminent was the fall of England. London was advised to surrender or become another Warsaw. . . . Marshal

von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, had arrived at the coast and was inspecting troops massed in the Atlantic ports. Reichsmarshal Göring himself was reported to be at the controls of a Junker plane which flew over London on the night of September 15, inspecting the city which he intended soon to occupy.

After it was all over, and the danger could be looked back upon, the London *Morning Telegraph* in a front-page leading article fixed September 16 as Hitler's Invasion Day. The British Press Association and many other sources ultimately agreed that 'September 16 was chosen as Der Tag of Hitler' (*New York Sun*, October 18, 1940).

A little more than a month after it happened, the *New York Times*, quoting as its authority the Air Ministry news service, put together many piecemeal communiqués and reports that passed the censorship during that month.

'The kernel of the story is that the British bombers, aided by a providential gale, attacked German troopships on the French invasion coast just after they had been jammed from beam to beam with German troops, and made their departure impossible by the ferocity of their attack.

'Today's story of the broken invasion attempt was preceded through several weeks by unconfirmed rumors from many points that the Germans had lost thousands of men, perhaps as many as sixty thousand, in such a disaster.'

On the night of September 15 a huge force of German bombers flew over England in what was later recognized as a preliminary to invasion. The size of this force may be guessed from the fact that one hundred and eighty-five of them, an all-time high up to that time, were shot down. While this was happening, the R.A.F. was keeping its harried eye on the invasion ports. From the air,

railway trains crammed with troops were seen converging on the ports, and undoubtedly the invasion was about to start.

Hardly touching the ground after their defensive battles over England, the R.A.F. charged desperately across the Channel and attacked the whole coast. The pilots could see thousands of troops being loaded into barges and transports.

Time Magazine (October 26, 1940) says: 'The British bombed them unmercifully and a westerly gale came up to batter them. So the expedition was abandoned, the troops disembarked in frightful confusion.'

The London *Daily Mail* tells graphically how the Germans tried desperately to get the barges to safety, but scores of them were overturned and thousands of soldiers were drowned.

One scene of this terrific drama was watched by people on the shore. Edwin Tetlow, *Daily Mail* correspondent, says: 'So much smoke and water appeared in the air that it was impossible to see immediately what had happened to the ships. When the view cleared they were no longer there.'

One of the most amazing features of the tremendous achievement by the R.A.F. was the fact that, despite the 'providential gale,' not a single British plane was lost (Associated Press, London, October 18, 1940).

The gale plays its part in every account of the heroic engagement. The *Daily Mail* says, 'They were the victims of the Channel storms and a merciless R.A.F. bombardment.' The Associated Press account from London says the invaders were routed 'after a day of harassing bombing action and in consequence of the strong westerly wind which swept the Channel through the night.'

Not only did the gale do its devastating best in upsetting the boats, many of which were Rhine river

barges, but it also cooperated with the R.A.F.'s use of incendiaries. The wind, of course, provided ideal conditions for the maximum effectiveness from these incendiaries, and fire swept and raged across the distressed barges.

Even before it was realized as marking the turning back of the invasion, these sky-high fires were reported. The *London Morning Telegraph* on September 19 said, 'Seen from the Kent coast it provided an awe-inspiring sight . . . enormous flashes of flame lit up the French coast.'

So, there was one more time when what easily could be called an unforeseen weather event helped to turn the current of history. But in this highly scientific war, there are no unforeseen weather events — except when Something bigger than meteorology changes its Mind.

Weather also had a decisive task in what has been called 'one of the most crushing defeats in naval history.' It was the first great single victory over the Japs by the Allied Air Force in the southwest Pacific. This, of course, is the almost incredible battle of the Bismarck Sea, fought and won in a matter of hours, beginning on March 1, 1943.

General Douglas MacArthur himself in his official communiqué said, 'Merciful Providence has guarded us in this great victory.'

Not once, but several times, the weather became a factor in this momentous defeat in which the Japs 'lost more ships than the total number of men we lost.'

When this staggering fact was given in the dispatches, it was admitted that it was 'practically incredible.' But it actually was true that we traded one man for every ship we sank — and they were big ships. And then, for good measure, we destroyed a number of extra craft.

Patient planning preceded the battle. The Allies knew that the Japs must try to send reinforcements to

northern New Guinea in order to hold the bases of Lae and Salamaua. So they policed the narrow Bismarck Sea waiting for the convoy to come through. At Port Moresby everything possible was being prepared for a massed attack from the air—a life-and-death contest between air and naval power.

On Monday, March 1, under cover of a heavy storm-head of clouds, fourteen Japanese warships and merchantmen were sneaking along, completely hidden from the single patrol bomber on duty above. But suddenly, there was an opening in the dense clouds, and through that opening the pilot got a glimpse of what headquarters had been hoping for for weeks.

He flashed back the word, and the whole machinery of attack whipped into motion. But the storm was apparently on the side of the Japs, and the great force of Allied planes could knock out only four ships. In the meantime, eight more Jap vessels had rushed to the rescue of the convoy.

The fact is that what seemed like a weather disadvantage to the Allies later proved to have been a distinct coup on their side. The total destruction was swelled by the fact that the impossible weather which occurred on the first day of the battle allowed the Japs to bring up eight more ships to help the convoy. And these ships, also, when the weather lifted, were finally destroyed.

All through Tuesday, the Japs seemed protected by the heavy weather, and the best the Catalina flying boats could do was to keep the convoy in sight as it turned south toward Lae.

But Wednesday morning, the weather abruptly changed. A tropic sun came up and flashed on the wings of the American and Australian planes. Men who had almost given up hope in the mud of the jungles looked up into the bright blue sky and saw their own

planes streaming across, wave after wave, until a hundred and thirty-four planes had passed overhead.

Before the sun went down again that night, all but two ships of the entire convoy had been sunk, and those two were broken up the next day. A hundred and two Jap planes were destroyed and fifteen thousand men. By March 4, ninety thousand tons of enemy ships had been destroyed and the official communiqués were able to report, 'We have achieved a victory of such completeness as to assume the proportions of a major disaster to the enemy.' It was the greatest victory ever achieved by purely air action against a naval surface force.

The part played by the weather has never been minimized in official communiqués or dispatches — With all the praise and honor given to General MacArthur and Lieutenant General Kenny and their brilliant flying men, a different kind of gratitude went up from the men themselves to that Higher Officer who marshaled the clouds into strategic position.

There is not space here to tell about the many times when individuals or groups have felt that 'luckily the weather intervened.' There have been countless stories about men and women on rafts or in lifeboats who prayed definitely for rain when they needed drinking water, and who felt that their prayers were answered.

When the *Wakefield*, which had formerly been the ten-million-dollar luxury liner *Manhattan*, caught fire while traveling westward in convoy in September, 1942, it was the unaccountably calm sea and the absence of wind that made it possible for all sixteen hundred persons on the ship to be saved. Not one life was lost when the ship had to be abandoned for a time.

The *New York Times* (September 10) said, 'Only the smooth sea and the absence of a strong wind prevented the fire from causing a major marine disaster.' Captain C. F. Bryant, commander of the convoy escort, said that

if the fire had occurred on a bad night with a rough sea running, it would have been impossible to rescue one tenth of those aboard the big transport.

The ship, though charred badly, was not lost, but was brought safely into port to be repaired and put into service again. Gunners manning the *Wakefield's* anti-aircraft guns had to throw the live shells overboard as fast as they could when the fire swept over the decks. But they prayed as they worked, and there were no explosions.

When a large party of men was trapped in the fore-castle by the flames, a destroyer in the convoy came bravely alongside and the men climbed down ropes and embarkation nets. The superstructure of the little rescuing destroyer was battered and partially demolished against the steep sides of the *Wakefield*, but not one life was lost.

In spite of the danger on the ship, there was a noticeable lack of fear among the men as they 'confidently' awaited their rescue. Many of the men who experienced the almost miraculous rescue said that they had prayed, and that the 'miraculously calm sea' gave them assurance that God was taking care of them.

Weather made the headlines in one of the biggest Berlin air raids yet achieved, on March 28, 1943. The weather, as seems to happen quite often when it chooses to take a hand in this war, began by being unfavorable. There were dense clouds over the North Sea and enveloping Germany itself. In a copyrighted story for the *New York Herald Tribune*, Major Sy Bartlett of the United States Army Air Force tells what he saw on the expedition.

He was riding as observer and a supernumerary bombardier in a Lancaster plane named the 'B for Beer.' Major Bartlett said that a port motor conked out just as they were setting their course for Berlin, but the crew

looked at each other, flipped a 'thumbs-up' at each other, and went on. The weather was pretty bad, woolly dirty clouds that looked as if they couldn't be blasted apart with dynamite.

'Then the most astonishing thing happened,' Major Bartlett says. 'We were twenty-five to thirty miles from Germany when some Anglo-American deity pulled the fog aside and showed us the target.'

Men in other planes observed the same thing. Over and over when they came back, they reported that suddenly great pockets had opened in the murky clouds, and clear patches and 'convenient' holes had yawned over Berlin, and at the moment when they were ready to unload their bombs the low clouds seemed to drift away and leave the sky clear except for the normal haze that hangs above a city.

Another amazing feature of that history-making raid, the first of the really terrific ones on Berlin, was the fact that so few Allied bombers were lost on the trip.

There is little doubt that when the whole story of the war is put together, the landing of our troops in North Africa will be considered the hinge upon which our war effort turned from defensive activity to aggressive offensive. The landing of our troops in North Africa was the greatest transport maneuver in all history. It involved heroic planning, down to its slightest, last detail.

Yet one of its most crucial factors, of course, was the weather, and this, as always, could in no way be controlled. This could only be scrutinized and studied so that other plans could be fitted into it as advantageously as possible. The weather could easily have turned the achievement into a gigantic disaster. As General George C. Marshall himself said about it afterward, 'What do you suppose would have been the reaction of the American public had our convoys for North Africa been subjected to a mass air and naval attack, the bulk of the

transports sunk, thousands of soldiers drowned and the entire expedition forced to turn back — mutilated and defeated?’

But no such dire thing happened, for the weather, the unpredictable weather so hazardous off the African coast, seemed to breathe a benediction while the men were landing.

These thrilling sentences below are the words of General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army. They were given in a closed session of the War Congress of American Industry, held at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York on December 4, 1942.

‘Carefully though we may prepare our plans, warfare involves many imponderables and the world-wide character of the present struggle is literally filled with uncertainties.

‘To all intents and purposes, the initial phase of the North African operation developed with clocklike precision. One of our greatest concerns had been the problem of landing men, tanks, and guns from small boats on the west coast of Morocco. At this period of the year the winds over the Atlantic drive huge swells onto the exposed beaches of northwest Africa. Normally only on *seven days out of thirty are landings possible*. Yet we were faced with the fact that great convoys cannot loiter; they must not turn back.

‘On the night of the actual landing, the date of which had to be set months before, weather reports indicated that two storms were approaching the coast, creating a surf that would make landings utterly impracticable.

‘But the hand of the Lord was over us. The storms appeared to neutralize each other.’

And then, obviously moved by what he was saying, General Marshall added, ‘An old Frenchman in Casablanca reported that the sea was calmer on that particular night than he had seen it in sixty-eight years.’

General Marshall was not alone in his acknowledgment of divine help on this expedition. General George S. Patton, who commanded the American forces in that historic feat, issued a communication to all Army and Navy units participating in the invasion. This is what he wrote:

'It is my firm conviction that the great success attending the hazardous operation carried out on sea and on land by the Western Task Force could only have been possible through the intervention of Divine Providence, manifested in many ways.

'Therefore, I should be pleased if in so far as circumstances and conditions permit, our grateful thanks be expressed today in appropriate religious services and prayer.'

Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, also, admitted that prayer had been a part of his preparation for this great adventurous expedition. He declared it publicly at the time he awarded the Distinguished Service Medal to Admiral Henry K. Hewitt for his services in French Morocco.

In a very simple and moving way Secretary Knox told how he had suffered sleepless nights, worrying about the safety of our troops in convoy. Finally, he said, he asked Mrs. Knox to read to him from a battered little Bible which he had carried through the First World War.

The words of the Twenty-Third Psalm were of great comfort to him, he said, and many times through the tense days before the safe arrival was announced, he held his mind along that ancient line:

'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.'

But it was not only the leaders who were conscious of needing some religious support throughout this experience. A chaplain who had been on a warship which returned to Norfolk after helping the men land in Casa-

blanca told an interesting story about a supply of New Testaments.

He had started out with five hundred little books, expecting to give them out to other chaplains who would be working in North Africa. But one by one the supply dwindled until there were none left, because throughout the trip one man after another came and asked if he could have a Bible for his own.

There always will be skeptics, good earnest ones, who can explain away all evidence of everything that is beyond this world's precincts. But the men who are closest to the epic dangers of this moment are closest also to its miracles. They will not argue with you; they do not need to.

The Closest One

THE MAN who told me this story is a big boyish chap, with a laugh that shakes the chandelier. He had a newspaper photograph taken aboard an American transport in foreign waters. The clipping showed a big crowd of American boys gathered around a little blurred object, with their mouths all loudly open.

'You can see what it is, can't you?' he said, obviously delighted with the whole thing.

'Not exactly,' I had to admit.

'Why, it's an organ. It's Reedy's organ! Sure as you're a foot high — there it is right in the newspaper . . . And you see who is playing it, don't you?'

'Well — some kind of youngster . . . ' I said.

'Some kind of youngster?' he said indignantly. 'Why, it's Reedy himself!'

So he began telling me about Reedy.

Reedy is a youngster who has been on his own most of his life. Except for what he calls his Father-Mother God. This relationship is the basis of all his reasoning. The principal thing he believes is that God is both the father and mother of us all, and that makes us brothers.

'The way I figure it,' Reedy says, 'the man you speak to is the one that answers you. So I try to speak to the good man down inside everybody.'

A lot of good men have answered the boy . . .

Reedy is in the Navy; he is part of the permanent company on a huge American transport which is a converted luxury liner. He's the ship's barber, and a mighty good one. The other boys hang around his barbershop even when they don't particularly need a haircut.

After the permanent ship's company had worked together for some weeks, a little group of them decided they'd like to hold their own church services on the ship. They tried out several corners around the converted luxury liner, but none of them seemed just right. So, rather apologetically, they began holding the services in Reedy's barbershop.

'It might not seem just the right place to some people,' one of the boys said, 'but when you're reading the Bible — well, in a few minutes you just kind of forget where you are. The Bible is a location in itself — a mental place, and the physical place doesn't matter much.'

But Reedy has a strong sense of the fitness of things. He wanted services to be the best they could possibly be made. And he had a plan up his sleeve. He remembered that once when he was in Boston, he had seen a little organ in a second-hand shop. The ship was going to be in Boston soon, and he decided — if he had money enough — to buy it.

That's how my friend happened to run into him one day, browsing around among the dusty red plush and gilt paint of a second-hand store. There were baby carriages and love seats and china closets, but no portable organs.

'Who'd play it if we did find one?'

'Why, I would,' Reedy said immediately.

'You play an organ?'

'Well, I never have,' he admitted, 'but I could pick

it up. You can always do what you need to do.' They didn't find the organ that day. But Reedy's friend got in touch with some people and told them about the need, and they supplied it. With the assistance of the Navy chaplain on the ship, the organ was presented, to be used by men of all faiths for holding their services.

So one of Reedy's minor prayers was answered. It wasn't a life-or-death prayer of course, but one prayer answered is evidence that there is hearing and power.

Reedy was grateful — he was more than that, he was tickled to pieces. But he wasn't surprised. He expects answers. He bases his entire behavior on that expectation.

'It says in the Bible, "Seek and ye shall find." That doesn't mean in the big things — it means in everything,' he explains.

Coming back from the Solomons recently, the ship brought back a number of naval and Marine casualties. One of the radio officers on the ship wrote a letter to his mother which tells the following story better than I possibly can. So I have obtained permission to quote from it.

According to the letter one of the boys who occasionally dropped in to listen to the services which Reedy conducted was a young pharmacist's mate. While he was attending the casualties he found a couple of Marines who he thought might like to hear something about Reedy's faith. So he asked Reedy to go down and talk with them.

The radio officer says in his letter, 'The lad was a young Marine, and had been wounded in such a way that the doctors had told him he would have the use of his legs, but would not be able to walk without support.'

He then describes how Reedy went to see him, and sat down on his bunk and had a good long talk about

God, and His loving care for His children, and of God's ability to heal now just as He healed in Jesus' time.

'When he had finished,' the letter continues, 'the lad looked at him and said, "You know, talking to you seems like I've been talking with God."

'Reedy said, "Let's say that you have been, and that I'm merely a mortal loudspeaker for His voice."'

They went on talking awhile, the boy in the bunk and the lad who was being the mortal loudspeaker for God. They talked about man's life, which is in God's keeping.

The wounded lad said, 'You know, when I get home I'm going to be able to walk.'

Reedy said: 'Yes, when you get home. And where is your home?'

'Why, Springfield.'

'No. I mean really. Where are you really at home?'

The Marine looked puzzled. So Reedy tried to explain what he meant. 'Isn't God perfect, and isn't he everywhere? When your consciousness is at home in God, then you are well.' The sick lad thought this over.

Then, the radio officer writes, 'He promptly got up out of his bunk, took a step out into the middle of his room, and stood there entirely unaided. From there he walked right out into the passage and down to get a drink of water.

'He stood there a minute, then turned to Reedy and said, "You know, I've never been topside." He turned and walked up the ladder (not a vertical one) to the next deck and out to the weather deck.

'He hesitated there and leaned against the bulkhead, for the ship was rolling and the wind was pretty hard. Reedy went up and touched his arm and the lad walked right out in the wind and braced himself against the rail.

'Pretty soon he got chilly with only his sick bay pa-

jamás on, so he turned and walked back down to the sick bay. The doctors were down making sick calls, and they saw him come down the ladder.'

The letter finishes, 'The pharmacist's mate touched Reedy's hand and said, "Thanks."

'Reedy said, "Don't thank me."

'And Doc said: "I'm not. I'm offering my thanks through you — you are the closest one." '

From Home —

WHEN YOU SAW HER, you just naturally thought of Johnny, her brother. She was so proud of him, and they had always been so fond of each other. He was a flyer now, with the R.A.F., and she had been caught here on a student's visa, with no immediate way to get home to England. But she is a beautiful person, inside and out, and there were plenty of places where she was welcome for as long as she could stay.

I had met her first in England, and then here, for we had many mutual friends on both sides of the ocean. She always told me wonderful things about Johnny, about their childhood and their letters, and about Johnny's terrific jolliness.

The same absurd thing would happen to me almost every time we talked about him. Her dark eyes used to simmer with happiness and I used to think to myself, 'I don't know which of you I like the most, you or Johnny . . .' and then with a shock I'd remember that I'd never seen him.

About a year ago, she came down to New York while I was there. She had taken a nurses' training course, and I used to think to myself, 'When night comes in the hospital rooms, and it's time to put the flowers out beside the doors, the way they always do in hospitals, I

imagine they get mixed up sometimes, and set her outside with the other bouquets.' You see, she is such a lovely-looking person, with such a fragrant mind . . .

I ran into her in a theater lobby. We were each with parties of people unknown to the other.

'Hi, there . . .' she called out to me. She had a pink tulip pinned to her white silk collar, with its petals turned wrong side out to show the white star which is usually hidden in the cup.

'Hi, there . . .' I said. 'How's our Johnny?'

Her lipstick was exactly the color of the tulip and her eyes were as dark as the black stamens you can't usually see.

'He's fine,' she said. 'I had a wonderful dream about him last week.'

'Did you? What was it?'

'I thought I saw him in his uniform, and he was laughing. I said, "Look here, Johnny my lad, I've been doing a lot of praying about you lately," and he said, "Praying? Whatever for?" I said, "Praying about all the danger, of course." He just looked at me and laughed. "Danger?" he said as if he'd never heard of the word. "I don't know anything about danger." That was like him, you know. He *doesn't* know anything about danger.'

We went back in to the play, then, and all during the next act I kept thinking about the dream, and about Johnny.

I didn't see her again for probably six weeks. We ran into each other at a tea given for some relief or other.

She had on a big old-fashioned watch, pinned amusingly to her narrow lapel. It was a jolly little make-believe, like nice children playing in the attic on a rainy Saturday.

'What do you hear from Johnny?' I said, rather near the top of the page of our conversation.

'I wrote him a letter this very afternoon,' she told me after a moment, while her dark eyes tried to quiet down after that first leap of expression that always bounded into them when she thought of him. 'Matter of fact, I had a letter from one of his pals yesterday. Saying how much help Johnny's always been to the rest of the fliers — all his jokes and everything.'

'That was nice of him to write to you,' I said. 'Somebody you knew in England?'

'No. I think Johnny's spoken of him occasionally in his letters.'

'I suppose they like to write home,' I said, 'and probably Johnny's shown him your picture . . .'

She smiled at that, and I waited for her to add something more to it, but she didn't. After a moment I talked about something else.

I met the Eastons, who are friends of hers, and I asked about her.

'And what about Johnny?' I said. 'Any news of him?'

Mrs. Easton wrinkled her brow as if she were trying to remember something; then she said: 'Oh, yes. Helen was talking about him only last week. Something he wrote her once in a letter, I think. They're wonderful youngsters, those two . . .'

I didn't see her again for quite a long time. About three months, I think. Then I had a chance to offer someone a few hours in the country on a lovely autumn morning, and I thought of her.

'I'd love to come,' she said when I telephoned. 'I've something to celebrate today.'

She looked like someone who was celebrating when we met her. Everything about her looked happy and yet quiet. We were together a long time before I heard about him. I kept thinking I would ask her, and then not quite doing it. So at last she said, 'You haven't asked me about Johnny,' and her eyes sparkled.

'I thought you'd tell me about him,' I said.

She turned and looked at me, and I realized then that her face, her beautiful young face, had become somehow older and more subdued since last I had seen her. She looked at me a long time as if she were asking herself some question about me, then she said:

'I heard about him yesterday.'

'You heard about him? What do you mean?'

'I got a cable from him. He's not missing any more.'

Then she told me about it, and I realized for the first time what kind of brave faith had kept a vigil behind her eyes for the last five months.

'I got the first cable saying he was missing just before Easter,' she said. 'But that night I had such a lovely dream about him. We talked about danger in the dream . . .'

'Yes, I remember,' I said. 'You told me you'd heard from him . . .'

'At first I was so stunned about the cable that I just couldn't speak about it to anybody. Then after the dream, I said to myself: "Look here, the dream was *like* Johnny, and the cable wasn't. He couldn't be missing — he's never been missing from anything, and he can't be . . ." I *had* prayed about him, you know, and I did trust God, and I made up my mind that I wasn't going to believe the cable. I was going to believe the prayer instead.'

She went on from day to day then, praying constantly, and trusting her own faith. Then a letter came from the Middle East Committee of Adjustments stating that his personal belongings were in their hands. At the end of the letter they added what probably were routine words to them. They said, 'We hope, with you, that your brother is, in fact, safe and well.' She said to herself, 'I am not hoping alone; the committee is hoping with me.'

It seemed to her, then, that if she really did believe he was not missing or lost, she should act upon that faith. So she continued to write to him exactly as she always had. She filled the letters with words about God, although this was unusual between them.

She told not one single person that he was reported missing, and there never was a day when she gave up her praying for his safety. At last, after he had been gone almost four months, a cable came from England saying that it was believed officially that he had been taken prisoner.

This was good news, of course, but not good enough. So she kept her silence and her prayers. And then, the day before I saw her, she had received a cable from Johnny himself, sent from Cairo saying, 'Just arrived back safe and sound. Rejoining squadron.'

The reconnaissance plane which he was flying over Greece had crashed into the sea, and the boy who had written to her was certain that Johnny had been drowned. He was, however, picked up by the Germans and put in a prison camp, where he stayed for two months. He had no Bible with him in prison, but he tried to remember all the verses he had ever heard. He said the only one he was sure of was the verse which says, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

He tried to think what Truth that could possibly mean, and it came to him that it might mean that God gives man intelligence in order to work out good purposes. His desire to be free was such a purpose — to continue this war against the evil dynasties of the world. He began to pray that he might have the intelligence which would free him, and he did escape.

He made his way down to Athos, on the shore of Greece, where he found a monastery. The monks took him in and were kindness itself.

But after he had been there two weeks, Germans came, not to search for prisoners of war, but to appropriate some art treasures for which this monastery was famed. In fairness to his hosts, Johnny slipped down to the shore, where he was given a boat by some Greek sailors.

In this he rowed ninety miles across the Aegean to Çanak Kale in Turkey. From there he went on to Cairo and after a brief pause at Hurricane House, a rest home for airmen on leave from the desert, he got back to his squadron.

Helen says that one wonderful feature of the entire experience is that although Johnny was badly treated by the Germans in their prison camp, his spirit kept uplifted and strong during everything. And more than this — when he got back to his own squadron, he was examined by a medical board who pronounced him absolutely fit.

I have thought a great deal about this brave prayer sustained throughout a tense ordeal. Even if you do not wish to concede that the prayers of his sister actually protected this lad, they certainly transformed what could have been a heartbroken period of grief into a gallant vigil. If it did no more than that . . .

Prayers from home may come from little brothers, fathers, the girl next door — from anybody. Prayers, like God himself, are no respecters of persons. Full-page newspaper advertisements of the Todd Shipyards say: 'If you haven't a boy to work for, "adopt" one. Isn't there some youngster in the fight for whom you can say a silent prayer — a neighbor's boy — a young fellow who worked with you — that swell kid who delivered the groceries?'

The story below is about a prayer which came from a soldier's aunt.

A middle-aged little woman in Oconomowoc, Wis-

consin, suddenly awoke in the night, as if someone had called her. She was Mrs. Minnie Turville, and she has written her experience for me in these words:

'I could not go back to sleep. Finally the thought came to me that perhaps God had called me to pray. "For whom, Lord?" I asked, and then there flashed on my mental vision my nephew in uniform looking earnestly at me. Still I thought, "For whom shall I pray, and for what?"'

Obediently she arose from her bed and went down on her knees, and the thought of danger and fear was heavy on her heart. She prayed for a long time, and then peace came to her, for she knew that if God had awakened her to pray, he certainly would answer the prayer. So she went back to bed and fell asleep.

The next day was Sunday, the seventh of December, and the year was 1941. When she heard the fateful broadcast about Pearl Harbor, where her nephew was stationed, she closed her eyes and thanked God, for she knew that he was safe.

'It is an answer to prayer,' she writes to me, 'and nothing but a miracle from the hand of God could have kept that bullet from going through his heart.'

The rest of the story has been told in various newspapers, for it has many unusual features, one of which was the fact that young Dean Grant Darrow did actually have a bullet in his heart, while he was walking around and doing his work.

That Sunday morning at Pearl Harbor, he was getting ready to leave the *West Virginia* for a few hours' shore leave, and had just gone down to his locker to change to his shore whites. He was standing there in his skivvies, when the bos'n mate sounded general quarters. There was a terrific explosion, and the deck buckled under his feet like a griddle cake being flipped.

'All hands to general quarters,' the loudspeaker sys-

tem was saving over and over. Dean, forgetting his skivvies completely, dashed for the 'midships ladder. When he reached his station, his buddy was rigging the director for action.

'What goes?' he shouted.

'Japs!' his pal screamed. Just then a wave of torpedo bombers came fluttering down like bats, with the orange-red insignia blazing on their wings. Already at the airport the hangars were roaring into flames, and the runways had been broken up like eggshells.

A second wave of bombers dived over the *West Virginia*. They cast a shadow of machine-gun bullets which ripped up the deck in a V of splinters, just the shape of the formation in the sky. The pilots banking away were so close that Dean says he could see their very buck teeth.

All around were wounded ships, coughing up black smoke which seemed to blot out the sun. The noise and concussion were so intense that Dean says he thought his eyeballs were being torn out of their sockets. Some helpless but enraged sailors whose ammunition had run out were seizing anything they could — potatoes, shoes, coils of rope, anything — and hurling them futilely at the Japs.

Dean's eye caught the glint of a torpedo charging straight at them, and he grabbed the director and hung on for his life. The ship lunged and lurched, and the men went sprawling as the deck buckled again. A tower of water came at them and drenched them, and it was only then that Dean realized he was wearing just his underwear.

A bomb made a direct hit on their life-jacket compartment and a snowstorm of kapok filled the air. Dean skidded on the bloody deck and went down, and when he tried to get up he was covered with kapok like a half-plucked chicken. But he groped his way to the nearest

gun, and half-blinded and scared to death, began slamming the heavy shells into the trays. But before he had a chance to fire, a terrific blast picked him up and tossed him into the water.

Burning oil was all around him, and noise unbelievable. The little Liberty boat which had come out to take the boys off for their shore leave was near him, and he grabbed at its gunwale and hoisted himself aboard.

When he woke up he was in the hospital. He had been unconscious for days, one of the few people on earth who didn't know what had happened that morning. When he caught up with events, he found that a piece of shrapnel had punctured his back, but that he was getting along fine. The hole, in fact, had practically healed up, and he was feeling great. The next day he got up and helped tote trays to the other patients.

Within eight days they gave him some clothes and a pair of shoes and said he could go back to work, and he was tickled to pieces. The harbor, of course, was unrecognizable, and he, like the rest of the world, was mad to his backbone. He was assigned to another destroyer. The sight of the proud *West Virginia* — the 'Wee Vee,' as her men called her — brought furious tears to his eyes, and he said to himself that he'd personally tear Tokio apart with his bare hands when he got around to it.

Meantime there was work close at hand and he did that. Nobody on the ship wore anything but dungarees now, and there was no time for jesting or play. The destroyer became part of a convoy bound for an unknown port, and day after day they plodded along watching for attackers, still stunned and sick at heart. Christmas passed them, and they barely noticed the day.

'Hmn, turkey,' they said listlessly. 'Oh, that's right. It's Christmas, isn't it. Merry Christmas, chum.'

They were in tropical waters now, so the men went

swimming every day. They would put the embarkation net over the side of the ship, and those that couldn't dive would go down that way. Dean had always been a good swimmer, but now it seemed that something had happened to his breath. He was wheezing like an old man of thirty, he says. A couple of times he suddenly fainted dead away, and then he remembered that he was supposed to have some kind of appendix that a doctor back home said might give him trouble some day.

So they sent him aboard the hospital ship and took out the appendix, and in a little while he was up again, expecting to be as frisky as ever. But he was still a wheezy old man, and it was getting embarrassing.

So they began taking X-rays of him, and suddenly the whole hospital ship was full of excitement, and word had trickled out over the ship radio and had become news. There was a dark spot in the apex of his heart, and it was a Jap bullet.

At home in Wisconsin his sister and aunt turned on their radio one day and heard it say: 'Honolulu: Dean Grant Darrow, an American sailor, has been carrying a bullet around in his heart since the attack on Pearl Harbor . . .'

His sister fainted dead away ('She just blacked out,' Dean says), but his Aunt Minnie closed her eyes and said, 'God, you took care of him that night — please go on taking care of my boy.'

Quickly as they could, they shipped Dean back to the Mare Island naval hospital, where they had one of the finest heart men in America waiting for him. On the way over, he played leapfrog with a gang of fifty nursery-school children who were being evacuated. He simply couldn't get the idea that he was a very sick boy.

At the hospital Lieutenant Commander E. F. Holman, the heart specialist, explained to him the exact

nature of the precarious operation, and after he had a little visit with his family, he put himself in the surgeon's hands — and in the hands of God.

As many specialists as could crowd into the theater watched the operation, because it was making medical history. Doctor Holman, with unerring skill, made a long hook-shaped incision. He removed parts of three ribs and diverted some others out of their normal position in order to lay the heart bare. He slit the pericardium, and finally the heart itself, to find the bullet. For an incredible length of time he held the bullet with forceps, while each beat of the heart itself pulled it free, a hair's width at a beat.

Newspapers, writing about the operation after it was over, called it 'a modern miracle.' Dean Darrow himself wrote of it: 'I have the bullet now, a Japanese machine-gun bullet. But to me it's a memento of the power of God working through skilled hands.'

But although the operation was phenomenally successful, Dean's heart trouble had only begun. For when he regained consciousness, the first thing he saw was a blonde little Navy nurse. He flipped head over heels in love with her at first sight, he says.

She had to get a discharge from the Navy in order to marry him, but they managed it all right. Dean Darrow, too, was given his discharge when he was completely recovered.

But he's still in the war; make no mistake about that. For this is what he says about it: 'I'm working out at Lockheed now. Helping to build them, instead of dodge them. And every once in a while some new fellow asks me why I work so fast. All I say to that is, "Buddy, if you'd been where I have, you'd want to turn these things out in a hurry, too."'

Where Water and Sky Meet

THIS CHAPTER belongs to Mr. MacPherson. It came out of various pockets when we met, and while he was at sea it came in clippings and in person from men he sent to see me. Some he wrote about from Cardiff and Norfolk and Corpus Christi, where he buttonholed some lad with a limp and questioned him critically with his shaggy Scotch eyebrows tilted fiercely.

Often through the winter, he mentioned Eric Barcova, the Spanish Swede. 'Wait till the big lad gets here. He'll tell you the real tales,' he said.

Meantime we heard countless stories of violence and disaster and faith. Many of them were told in the lounge of the Seamen's Church Institute down on South Street in New York, where sea fog creeps up to the very window sills, and the boat whistles lace the air with lonesomeness.

Naturally after all his years at sea, Mr. MacPherson knows a great many seamen, and where seamen are these days there are adventure stories. Quite often, like the very sea fog itself, brooding over the story of violence, there is peace of heart, and prayer. Though this Mr. MacPherson calls by other names.

'It's understandable why they go to sea,' he says. 'They get away from the war out there.' He chuckles silently a moment at that, then he sobers. 'But that is

a fact. A mon can do his job at sea and that is all he can do. He sees the same things still being true that always were true — the tides and the sky, and the ships themselves. That gives a mon confidence when everything else seems topsyturvey on the land.'

So eager has Mr. MacPherson been to get good things for this book that he has not quibbled with whether or not it is sensible for men to have faith, as you might expect an atheist to. There are sleights-of-hand by which he dodges the self-indictment of being a religious man — and one of these devices is that he has faith in faith.

'Why, of course!' he has said, when confronted with one of the 'miracles' which seamen tell about so plentifully these days. 'The mon had *faith*.' That explanation is one of the camels which slip past Mr. MacPherson's gnat-straining. He hasn't faith in God, but he certainly has faith in faith. And I for one see no reason to embarrass him with definition.

So there has seemed nothing inconsistent to him in this search of his, carried on for many months from port to wartime port, for the perfect story which will represent the many, many rafts and lifeboats on which men prayed, and God answered.

While he has been at sea, many strange telephone calls and many strange visitors have come to my New York apartment. Some of them have told wonderful stories. You cannot doubt that they happen. They are similar to each other, as are the old miracle plays. There are certain almost symbolic properties in the dramas, which appear over and over, moving in their very repetition; the gull, the cloud before the wind that turns back and spills down a benediction of rain; the ship that passes by, and the faith that is nearly lost; the ship, then, that comes, and proves that faith held *is the* miracle which finally must be made visible.

In each of these experiences there is an exciting focal point which marks the place where sea and sky meet — a new horizon of faith, for the men on the rafts, and for us safely at home who hear of them.

Fairst and I had kept close through his emissaries who drifted in and out of New York all winter, but I had not seen him himself for many months until he arrived suddenly at my apartment in a new suit whose pockets already bulged.

We left my New York, and went down to his, that teeming rim of Manhattan where the ships come in and go out to as much of the world as is open these days. He told me about his stories as we walked along Church Street, past the ship-chandler shops with brass lanterns, second-hand books, sewing kits, and chewing tobacco in their windows. To walk along Church Street and South Street with Mr. MacPherson is, in spite of yourself, to be a little boy in love with Robert Louis Stevenson.

But Fairst doesn't know any of that; and he was lost in his stories. He has heard even more of them during the last months than I have, but he is blunt about testing them out.

'Cairtainly they happened,' he says gruffly to the men. 'I know that. But did you pray? That's what I want to know. *Did you pray?*'

His responsibility for all this has put him in an unexpected position.

'A very comical thing has happened,' he told me. 'I've got a reputation now for being a man with a religious twist in me.'

'That's too bad,' I said sympathetically. 'I hope it doesn't hurt your standing too much.'

'On the contrary,' he said. 'It gives me a cairtain authority.' He smiled humorously at me. 'People like to know religious people these days.' Then he confided further: 'I've got a new nickname. You won't think it's

disrespectful, I hope.' He was a little uncomfortable now. 'They mean no harm; I'm cairtain of that.'

'What is it they call you?'

'Well — they call me "Old Didjapray."' He chuckled delightedly. '“Old Didjapray.” I suppose I did harp on it rather a bit. Whenever the lads got to telling big stories about rescues and one thing and another.'

We strolled along the lamp-lighted street, swarming with seamen, walking with that ungainly straddle-gait of theirs. Two tipped their caps to us as they passed, and Fairst put out his chest.

'Tomorrow they'll ask me if you are my daughter,' he said, taking my arm. 'They're always bragging about their daughters . . .'

Then he remembered where his chuckling had been interrupted by the tipped caps.

'Old Didjapray!' he repeated again. 'It's a bonnie name for an atheist!' His face was serious then and a long minute of silence fell between us. 'I almost forgot I am an atheist,' he said softly. 'Be a very comical thing if I did forget that, wouldn't it?'

'Very comical,' I said, patting his hand.

First of all, a noticeable curve upward has occurred in the length of time which people can survive on life-boats and rafts. In the beginning of the war it was a feat when some men survived a week on a life raft; a little later stories began coming into the newspapers which told of men surviving thirty days, and then fifty and even more. The grim record seemed surely set up by young Basil Dominic Izzi and his two Dutch companions, who arrived at a Brazilian port in February, 1943, after being on a raft eighty-three days.

But even that, incredible as it seems, was not the record. For a Chinese sailor all alone on a raft drifted

for one hundred and thirty days before he was picked up.

One day — even one day — must be a grueling ordeal on a raft, those flimsy, slatted, narrow platforms which ride so low in the waves that there is never a dry moment. The mental anguish and the physical suffering are so intense that afterward the survivors cannot remember it very clearly, for it blurs into a parched delirium, mercifully unreal. Many, of course, do not survive . . . But nearly all who do come back say frankly that it was some kind of 'miracle,' or even faith, that pulled them through.

After you have read and heard endless stories, you are tempted to say that the persons who do survive are the ones who refuse to give in to the terror of the thundering depths under them. You are tempted to say that it was not the dangers outside, but those that seep inside a man's skull, which finally mastered those who couldn't endure. But that is too fantastic, you remind yourself; people don't *choose* whether or not they'll give up, in the face of such peril.

Then you find that notion confirmed. Not in any religious pamphlet, nor even in any superficial 'inspirational' article. You find it among the starkest, most realistic instructions for survival, the Coast Guards' *Wartime Safety Book*. This is what it says:

Chances of survival of those adrift depend upon the frame of mind of the boat's company.

Not even 'depend largely,' or 'other things being equal.' No. The word is unmodified; just 'depend.' And the hundreds of men and women who have come back to tell about those days out of this world say that it is so.

Young Izzi, the twenty-year-old boy who lived eighty-three days on a raft, said, 'I never gave up hope because I knew God was with me all the way.' Even Job might

have doubted after the eightieth day, but Izzi kept his God so close to him that no doubt could come between. Keeping the awareness of God so close, he kept also the qualities of God, and in a degree he must have used those qualities as his own, since God had made him in his own image and likeness.

From the first Izzi had used ingenuity and intelligence to master his difficulties. After his ship was torpedoed, he had managed to keep afloat for two days by clinging to a bundle of bamboo sticks. On the third day he found a life raft. Four other men were clinging to it, and they had enough food to last only sixteen days and only enough water for about twenty days. Two of the men died finally, after the food was gone. Izzi thought of making a fish spear, so they pulled off an iron rod from one end of the raft, and fastened one half of a pair of surgical scissors to it. With this they patiently speared such food as they could — sharks mostly — and they ate what they could of these, squeezing water out of the flesh and the eyeballs as the grim book of instructions for survival suggests.

They lost the spear accidentally, but they did not lose their intelligence. There was nothing at all to work with except a piece of rope and their own ideas. Barnacles had begun to form on the underneath side of their tiny raft. So they scraped these off and ate what they could and used the smallest ones for bait for other fish.

When these gave out, they relied again on their ingenuity, and finally Izzi thought of using their own toes for bait. They made a noose of the rope, and put their feet inside the hook to lure a shark into the noose. It worked, and they snapped the rope around a huge fellow. Weak as they were, the men had a terrific struggle killing the dangerous brute. But they managed, and ate what they could.

When they were picked up at last, Izzi weighed only eighty pounds. He had weighed a hundred and forty-five when his ship was sunk. But the thing which really is the man himself — his courage, and his spirit, and the intelligence which kept him alive — had not decreased. The real part of Izzi could never be weighed in a scale, and it had not lost any part of itself, but rather had gained.

You wonder how men pray on such a raft. You wonder what kind of prayers they are; surely not very formal ones. A dialogue, probably, such as most thinking is, a conversation carried on between oneself and One — the most obvious and yet the most unremarked phenomenon of the human mind.

Prayers, I have no doubt, differ as widely as persons themselves, differ as widely as love-making or fun-making. They must range all the way between prim, rigid formulas and a very firmament of consciousness stretching over all other thoughts — always as present as the sky in every landscape. This, I suspect, is the truest praying. 'Praying without ceasing,' I believe it was called. This habitual atmosphere of faith, perhaps, is like the constant awareness of love for someone, which we may sustain effortlessly, as compared with a halting verbal declaration of love.

But all prayers, whatever form they assume, are of profit to the man who utters them; of that I have become convinced. What might seem like only a weak outcry to one man may serve as the fulcrum of courage to another.

For instance, a seaman named Frank Holmgren who was wrecked in the South Pacific feels that his prayers were answered immediately. According to a story in the *New York Sun*, he prayed for food, and as soon as he had finished a fish leaped out of the water and landed in his lap. He prayed for rescue, and later that same

day an American destroyer came up and picked up the raft load. Yet while he was praying, he felt dissatisfied because he was accustomed to praying on his knees, and the raft was so crowded that that was out of the question.

So the boy simply lifted his face to the sky, and closed his eyes to the dangers they were beholding. But that double turning *to* God, and *away* from his own fear, was sufficient.

Other men have prayed differently. Chief Officer Roy Dudley Creser describes the experience of eight British merchant seamen adrift for thirty-four days on a tiny raft.

'Each night at dusk we took it in turns to pray. What do men pray about? Mostly to go on being men without making things difficult for others when they find themselves in a spot like we did.'

One prayer-theme expounded by a twenty-one-year-old radioman wrecked on his first sea voyage was the line, 'God helps them who help themselves.' This fresh-faced young seaman, Herbert S. Weiner, spent twenty-one days in an open boat in the broiling Indian Ocean and all he suffered was a sunburn. The boat had a complete set of griefs — monsoons and thirst, a spilled water supply and a relentless tropical sun. Added to the usual list there was a shark which young Weiner describes as being 'as big as the boat,' which never left its side for three days.

'He began to get on our nerves,' Weiner said. 'He was right alongside, and he was every bit as big as our boat. A seaman took an axe and waited for the shark's fin to come within reach. When it did, he belted him.'

'The shark became respectful. He followed — but in the wake, rather than where we could reach him.'

The same sailor with his trusty axe also managed to

get a dolphin, which the crew ate gratefully, because their chocolate had mildewed in the hot dampness.

On the thirteenth day the water was gone, and Second Mate Hanson led the men in the Lord's Prayer. Shortly wind and rain squalls came up. But it did the thirsty men no good, and they had something new to learn about patience.

'The water fell around us,' Weiner said, 'but not on us. We steered to the water, and when we got to the point where the rain was falling, it would stop and come up in another place.'

This capricious behavior of the rain went on like that for two days, and then the cook said, 'God helps them who help themselves.' By this time the men were humbly praying before and after their meager meal of a cracker or two. So the cook, thinking about God's expectation of men to help themselves, rigged up buckets and ran heated sea water from the oil can through a hose to a cold wet cloth, which condensed good water — about two ounces of it.

'But the cook was right,' Weiner says. 'The rain did fall — fifty-five gallons of it poured into our kegs and a tin case we had.'

'The men began to cry with happiness.'

The heat and the endless dazzling ocean played cruel pranks with their nerves. They saw shore lights, and then when their rejoicing had falsely lifted their spirits, they knew it was only sunset rays reflected on the white bodies of the flying fish.

But they kept resolutely to the original course, believing that if they were faithful it would sometime give them a landfall. And that night a sandpiper lighted on their boat, and again they wept for happiness, because a sandpiper is a shore bird.

But the trial was not quite over, for on the twentieth day a monsoon came crashing into them and ripped off

the rudder and almost tore their sail to shreds. Weak as the men were, they had to stagger from port to starboard and keep shifting their weight to prevent the boat from capsizing. Praying again, they fell asleep, and when they awoke, a lovely curve of land was written against the sky like music in a score.

'De Lord bless mah soul, I hears a train whistle!' cried a young negro boy, and the rest thought he had at last gone quite off his head. But then they saw steam rising, and through a clearing in the trees on the shore, they saw a train!

Instead of the desolate island they had expected, they had made their landfall at an inhabited place, accustomed to boats coming in after torpedoing. The natives gave them a welcome — and more than that; there was a ship which needed a radioman. So Weiner, a little too thin for anybody's pants just then, signed on and shipped back to America, where he eats and eats, and drinks his fill of good cold water.

It is sometimes a remembered stanza from a hymn which seems to build the invisible raft on which the spirit clings. A Marine attached to one of our cruisers which was sunk off Guadalcanal says that throughout the battle the words of a hymn kept singing in his mind:

O blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field, although
He seems invisible.

The Marine didn't know that he ever had learned these words by heart, but there they were, when he needed them.

The battle lasted for forty-five minutes of fierce fighting, and early in the engagement this boy's gun was put out of action.

'So I took the only thing I had, which was that hymn,'

he said. 'And the funny thing was, I stopped being scared to death the way I had been.' He left his post and ran around helping his shipmates any way he could, and he says that the sight of him not looking afraid seemed to buck them up.

When the orders came to abandon ship, he went calmly over the side and swam around in the water, still saying the words of the hymn, and even humming the tune under his breath. At last someone pulled him onto a life raft.

There were three other Marines on the raft, badly shaken up from the battle.

'We can't stay out here,' one of them said. 'Best thing for us to do is try to make that island over there.'

They could see the island about four miles away. 'Yeah — but you know that's an occupied island.'

'Occupied or not,' said the Marine, who was both wounded and seasick, 'I'd rather take my chance with the Japs than try to stay out here. Nobody'll pick us up here.'

'I'd rather be a live prisoner — even of the Japs — than a dead free man,' somebody else said.

The Marine who tells this story said that he was very much opposed to trying to make the island. But he was only one against the majority, so he gave in, trusting himself — and the safety of the others on the raft — to God.

'I said, "God, you're certainly invisible, like the hymn says — but please be there on the field, and take care of us."'

Out loud he said: 'Okay, you guys. I'll do the rowing, and you tell me where to head for.'

He had barely started when a fog dropped low all around them. It began to rain, and try as they did, the island became completely hidden. They rowed awhile,

and though they couldn't tell where they were going, the Marine kept trusting God.

'Why don't you guys kind of relax?' he said. 'You just trust me, and go to sleep.'

They lay as close to each other as they could, for hot as the day had been, the night was cold and they were wet and wounded. The Marine himself says that he felt wrapped in the safety of that hymn, and in a little while he too fell asleep.

When they woke at dawn the fog had lifted. They looked in the direction where they had thought the island was. But in its place there was one of our own destroyers, which came when they signaled and picked them up. The young Marine says he never will doubt that God's protection is everywhere a man could possibly be, if only he will turn to it and trust it 'although He seems invisible.'

The story of young Stanley Powell I have saved for the last, because it has such a happy ending. A wedding, in fact, and also a citation for 'good services in the S.S. *Arletta* when the vessel was attacked by the enemy.'

Stanley is a tightly put together little Yorkshireman; 'Five Five' his friends call him, because that is about his size. He has a soft serious voice and a huge conscience. His mother thought he was pretty young to go to sea, but after the worst days of the Blitz on England, when he had made two trips weekly from London to a Scottish port along a route grimly called 'Bomb Alley,' she thought the good broad Atlantic might be a safer place for him.

So he studied as hard as he could and became a radio officer employed by the Marconi Company, assigned to a tanker by that company. By the time he got on the tanker he was quite accustomed to being machine-gunned and strafed; he said that sometimes the bomb-

ers swooped so low that he felt as if he could reach up and tweak the swastika painted on the wings.

It was then that he took to reading a Bible which he had found in the ship's library. He liked the Bible, and he took its promises quite literally. If God said, 'Fear not, I am with thee,' he meant just that. As long as you kept God with you, close as thought itself, there was nothing to fear. As simple as that.

The older men down in the engine room sometimes talked about God and the Bible; people do on ships these days. (As one of Fairst's grim-faced seamen said to me, 'There aren't any uncracked Bibles on the high seas today.') Stanley never entered into the discussions much; but there was one loud scoffer, a hard-boiled guy . . .

One night in convoy, Stanley's tanker was damaged in a collision, and had to drop out of the line according to convoy rule. They got her repaired after a while, and she went on under her own steam. But the convoy was out of reach now, so they limped along alone, dangerously exposed. To add to that, Stanley up in the radio room got two warnings that submarines were near-by.

There was nothing to do but double the watch, and wait. When the moment came that the torpedo bit into the little *Arletta*, there wasn't even time to send out an S.O.S. The tanker sank instantly. Stanley seized a small portable radio transmitter in one hand, his life preserver in the other, and his Bible verse in his mind, and jumped. 'Fear not, I am with thee,' the rushing waters seemed to shriek as they closed over him.

'It's hard to explain, but somehow in those few seconds I was suddenly conscious of all the promises of the Bible about the nearness and the presence of God, even there in the depths of the sea,' Stanley told newspaper

reporters later. He expected to be safe, for God had promised him.

There is an interesting point in this. Stanley doesn't go back on his own promises — that is one way he understands why God doesn't go back on His. For only the completely trustworthy know how to trust completely. Take the matter of the engineer's money, for instance.

Stanley was picked up by a raft, still clutching his life preserver and his transmitter — and his Bible verse. He had, besides, some money which he had sewed inside his clothes, which belonged to an old friend, the Chief Engineer.

'But why do you want me to keep it? Why don't you keep it yourself?' he had asked when the Engineer insisted on his taking charge of the money.

'It'll be safer with you,' the Engineer said. 'I don't know why. But I know nothing is going to happen to you.'

The Engineer had been right, as it turned out, for he himself was killed in the explosion, and nothing did happen to Stanley Powell.

So he had the money, and it stayed with him throughout. It had to be taken apart carefully and dried out later in the hospital; there was more of it than a seaman is allowed to bring into this country, but he managed to retain it even when the United States Government almost insisted on taking charge of it for him.

'It belongs to Smith,' he said, 'and I'm going to see that it gets back to his family.'

He had to borrow a little of that money later for his needs, but one knows that he will pay it back even though its owner is dead, for he is a man who keeps his promises — and whose God keeps His.

There were four rafts at first, but finally they separated to keep from being pounded to pieces. The days

and nights were difficult, and three times in the rough seas Stanley was flung off the little clinging-place.

'Again those words "Fear not, I am with thee" came. And I knew He was. Nothing short of His power could have saved us,' Stanley said in his published story.

'As days went on, our life took on a simple routine. In the morning we'd paddle up to the other rafts to see how things were going. At night we sang hymns, then we'd pray. We prayed for rescue, for strength to keep on, for those we loved at home. One of the boys had been in the Salvation Army earlier in his life. All this came easy to him.'

But the unbeliever, the scoffer, took it rather badly, at first. And then he too decided to pray. Not by halves, either. He raked up from the dark recesses of his memory some eloquent unction. So he outprayed everyone else. He became, in fact, so concerned over his previous life that he went off into lurid confessions. But the men on the rafts were indulgent with him; and so, no doubt, was God.

Days and days went by; a man, half-crazed, slipped over the side of the raft. But the rest endured. Food and water were nearly gone; the biscuits were green with mildew. There wasn't much talking now. 'In spite of all this, I didn't seem to feel weak,' Stanley said. 'I paddled for hours in what we figured was the direction of land.'

'We never doubted somehow that we would be rescued eventually. Our prayers had sustained us. God was near, and good.'

Then an airplane came overhead. The men on the raft screamed in their parched throats; they fell on their faces and wept in weak despair, for the pilot didn't see them. Then sharply he banked and turned, and came toward them.

Now he circled low and signaled with his blinkers.

He flew back to a puff of smoke on the horizon, and then they knew that the puff of smoke was really a ship.

'We cried and we thanked God. We clapped each other on the back and shook hands,' Stanley said.

He was brought into Boston at last, weak and ill in body, but strong and exultant in heart. There he made friends, and when he was well enough he was taken to the country for a while.

Then, one November afternoon, romance came strolling into his life. But the earnest little Yorkshireman almost let it pass him by, because he didn't realize that Americans and Englishmen sometimes mean quite the opposite things by the same word.

She was little Louise Parkhurst, not quite eighteen. Stanley himself is only twenty-two, and a hero to the countryside. So she did her best to make a good impression on him. But they were both pretty shy; they talked about England and America, and not about each other.

'Tell me about English girls,' she said, hoping he'd tell her about herself. And sure enough he did.

'We have different ideals for our girls,' he said. 'Now, at home you would be described as a homely girl.'

She was pretty surprised, of course, and annoyed no end. Just who did he think he was, telling her to her face, etc.? She was very cool to him from then on. But he was undeniably smitten, in a dignified Yorkshireman's way. He took a picture of her, and sent it home to his mother, and his mother wrote back immediately, 'Louise looks like a homely girl.'

'Fine thing,' Louise said angrily. 'It's not enough that you call me homely to my face — but now your mother has to write it across the ocean.'

'But you *are* homely,' he said. 'That's why I'm so keen on you.' It took him quite a long while to convince her that when an Englishman tells a girl she is

homely, he means . . . well, that she'd be nice to come home to.

So on February 12, which is Stanley's mother's birthday, they were married. They picked out a little English-looking church in Swampscott, Massachusetts, for the wedding. He went back to his job on the first of March, 1943, and in three weeks the citation for 'good service' came to her, a very official-looking document from the Ministry of War Transport.

He'll be back to get her one of these days when the war is over. But in the meantime, she's supposed to do war work also. And he hopes she's going to learn to love the Bible as he does.

'It's something that would keep us both safe,' he says with Yorkshire dignity. 'I know that. I proved it.'

Light in Gestapo Darkness

THERE IS A MAN in the Gestapo in conquered Poland who saw a miracle. He saw hundreds of men brought to a death house, and thrown into a dark and airless room without food or water. He saw them die one by one, and he took them out and buried them namelessly. He had his own thoughts about it all, day after day.

But once there was a miracle. A man, a slight, scholarly little man in a colonel's uniform, tumbled out of a crowded truck and was thrown in with the rest. The rest died, and new ones were given their standing room, but the man in the colonel's uniform did not die. Day after day, thirty, forty, fifty, he went on living and praying and comforting the others.

The Gestapo man watched him through the keyhole. He got a magnifying glass so that he could watch his expression and his eyes, hoping to find out the secret somehow . . .

I don't know what has become of the Gestapo officer. But the man in the colonel's uniform I know well. Thousands of others in this country know him, also, and in central Europe his name has stood for many years as a lamp burning in darkness.

Three million people in Poland and Russia have

learned about the Bible through Konstantine Jaroshevich. He is in New York as this is being written. a dapper young-looking man just past fifty, with a twenty-two-year-old son named Alexis who is a flier in the United States Air Corps. Doctor Jaroshevich has had a life which reads as though it had been written by Tolstoi, and he tells it like a Tolstoi character, with blazing eyes and dramatic hands, and the almost-symphonic voice of a born leader of men.

He is the most fearless man I ever have spoken to, the humblest and the most passionate. He has known many high political leaders in various countries; he is well educated, and eloquent with the fire which only a burning cause can kindle into speech. If he had not been a religious leader, I am certain he would have been a great actor. He is the only human I have ever seen who is utterly without self-interest, even the self-interest usually permitted in the name of a high purpose.

I am not informed about his theology, because, for the purposes of this book, I have tried to keep uninformed about theology, believing that the only sermons preached here should be those which deeds themselves speak, in the language of action and event.

When he tells about preaching in the streets and along the country roads in central Europe, you can see the crowds of weary laborers; when he describes the little cattle shed where he held his first church, you know that place, as if you yourself had been born there. He tells about finding other young workers to send out throughout the countryside.

'Now you are ready to go out and tell the people,' he said to the men whom he had lately 'told.'

'Man of God, give me a Bible to tell them from.'

'You want a word? There is the word which God put into your heart when he made you. Listen to that word.'

'But I want a Book besides.'

'You are the book, the living book,' he said patiently. But still they wanted a Bible. And he had none to give them. So he opened his own, and carefully he tore out the Psalms and gave that. To the next one he gave Matthew, and then Luke and John, and his own Bible grew thinner and thinner. Finally he gave one disciple Jude, that smallest book, and the new preacher's face fell in disappointment.

'Such a small book,' he said. 'How can I preach my whole life long with such a little book?'

'You will know how to preach,' he said. 'God will tell you. You are a fighter, my son, and Jude himself was a fighter. So the two of you go out together, and fight your way.'

He acts this out for you with dramatic simplicity. Then he closes the covers, the emptied covers of his invisible Bible, and you feel as if you must 'sell all your goods and give to the poor.'

It seems to you that Bibles are such a small thing for men to need — surely one should be given wherever it can be used. But one of the main works of this eloquent, earnest man is to find money to buy even the cheapest kind of Bibles for the people in Europe who want them so desperately.

Konstantine Jaroshevich, M.A., D.D., according to *Who's Who in the Clergy*, was born in Baielsk, Russia. He was educated in America, and is at this time the President of the Union of Churches of Christ.

Much of his energy is spent here in telling Americans of the great desire that is waiting in the Russian people to know more about religion. He tells about Russian Christians who sit up at night after their daily work is finished, copying chapters of the Bible to be passed around. So scarce is paper in some villages, Doctor

Jaroshevich says, that these excerpts are sometimes inscribed with a penknife on a piece of wood.

The religious purges and suppressions which occurred after the Revolution in 1917, as Doctor Jaroshevich sees them, were really a revolt against the political abuses of religion, and he is convinced that after the war, there will be a great religious renaissance in Russia such as has never been seen upon this earth.

However hopefully biased this earnest man's opinion may be on this point, the fact is that Easter, 1943, marked the greatest demonstration of religious revival in the Soviet Union since the Bolshevik Revolution. Tens of thousands of worshipers were reported as keeping all-night vigil in the churches, and the midnight curfew was lifted in Moscow for this purpose.

In the early nineteen-twenties when religious men were being persecuted in Russia, young Jaroshevich was riding on a train, and was questioned by a group of officers. They accused him of being some kind of professor, and then of being a minister. Although he knew quite well that he was in a dangerous position, he fearlessly began telling them about God. At first they were angry and then, because he is such a witty and amiable man, they began laughing. But gradually the questioner who had been the fiercest became interested.

They rode all day, and all day the young atheist and the almost-as-young religious man talked. When young Konstantine got off his train, the officer got off with him. They talked all night, and in the morning the atheist asked for a Bible.

Nearly twenty years passed, and Doctor Jaroshevich quite forgot the episode. But then, in a moment of dire panic, he went to Moscow for help for the Polish nation. A high army official sought him out.

'You do not remember me.'

Doctor Jaroshevich looked carefully into the strange face, and shook his head.

'I am the boy on the train. You told me I had been created in God's image and likeness — I have tried to live according to that likeness.'

It was this high official who arranged for Doctor Jaroshevich to talk to Stalin. They had a long talk, and at the end of it Josef Stalin asked for a Bible, and the Doctor gave him his own, which was all he had.

Missionary work was carried on in Central Europe by Doctor Jaroshevich and his followers for about twenty years, and it was steadily growing. Just two weeks before war was declared, there was a great general assembly with thousands of delegates from ten countries, including Esthonia, Latvia, and Rumania.

Doctor Jaroshevich presided at these conferences with a heavy heart because he knew that it was inevitable that war was going to cut short the work. At eleven o'clock of the night before war actually started between Poland and Germany, he had definite warning, and sent some of his workers to Doctor Jesse M. Bader, one of the delegates from New York City. In spite of his own protests, Doctor Bader was frantically packed up and put on the last train out of Poland before the trouble started.

A few days before this, Doctor Jaroshevich had called some of his assistants to him in Brest-Litovsk. 'I want you to sell this building,' he said.

'But, Doctor — you must be mad! We need this for our headquarters —' they protested.

'In a few days we shall need nothing at all,' he said quietly. 'I want you to sell our property for whatever you can get in cash, and take the money and buy food. As much as you can get. Only tinned food, of course.'

They thought indeed that he was mad, but he had warned them before of things to come, and they had learned to trust him. So they sold the building for

about five thousand dollars and took the money and bought all the food they could. Mostly they bought fish in tins.

'We have the food now,' they reported when they came back from their strange transactions.

'Good,' he said. 'Now bury it somewhere where we can get it easily when we need it.'

They had not long to wait, for suddenly, as everyone knows, on September 1, 1939, there was chaos in Poland. Warsaw, in desperate siege, tried to hold, but the rest of the country was ravaged within hours. Like a brave pulse, the eleven-noted phrase from one of Chopin's polonaises was being repeated over the radio night and day, telling the Poles and the helpless world that the capital was holding out against the Germans. But the people throughout the country were being crushed under the tanks rolling from the west.

At the beginning Doctor Jaroshevich received orders from the government to equip himself with a uniform and report to take charge of a part of the army. Although he was not a military man, the Prime Minister and the President, who knew him well, understood the tremendous influence he had with their people, and counted on his help in this crisis. But it was too late for any help. The army was in rout; the country in turmoil.

Doctor Jaroshevich met the top four officials of the government in a coffee shop. They were beside themselves.

'What can we do, Your Excellency?' they said to him.

'Don't call me Your Excellency!' he cried. 'I tried to warn you, but you would not listen. I told you when you attacked Czechoslovakia in 1938 that you were attacking yourselves. That was your downfall.' He sat down with them and tried to calm them, and finally advised them to attempt to flee from the country into

Rumania, which they did, leaving the army to him. But the army itself had scattered in panic, except for the hundreds of thousands bottled up in Warsaw waiting to be bombed to death.

Meantime, refugees were streaming into Brest-Litovsk from every road, and the city was packed so that every garden and house was as crowded as a subway at rush hour. Fourteen thousand people had jammed into the headquarters of the Union of Christ alone.

Doctor Jaroshevich's men dug up the food and fed as many as they could; they thinned it out and made soup the second day, and the third day they added more water to the soup. By the fourth day there was no crumb left.

Death was falling from the skies, and people were being killed by the thousands. Doctor Jaroshevich went out of the city to find a quiet hill where he could pray, and fifteen thousand people followed him up the hill, weeping and begging him to save them.

'These were largely infidels, the very people who had thrown sticks and stones at me a month before when they saw me in the streets,' he said. 'But now they knew that nothing but God could help them.'

The horror of those eleven days before Poland was captured is indescribable. He tells of walking along with two sobbing children in his arms. One was shot dead, and he laid her on the roadside. In a few minutes the other child sagged limp in his arms. Shells were falling around him, but he prayed aloud:

'God, you have given me your promise. Thou art my refuge; I am not afraid.'

He finally arrived at Pinsk, after that part of Poland had been taken by the Russians who marched their armies from the east and met Hitler near Warsaw. From Pinsk he made his way to Moscow itself, still wearing his colonel's uniform. He traveled mostly on foot,

whenever it was possible hanging on the side of motorized vehicles that passed him. It was during this strange trip that he talked with Stalin.

But it became clear to him that he could help the most by getting back to America and trying to organize post-war relief for the Polish people.

So in December he went back to Brest-Litovsk. There he found the city practically deserted because of the vast numbers of people who had either fled or died. There were only a hundred and fifty people left of his own church, and these were slowly starving to death.

Freight cars full of refugees were being transported across German-occupied Poland, and he waited three days at a railway station hoping to get transportation to Warsaw, and then on to America. The freight car in which he hoped to ride was standing on a siding for these three days, and when at last it was opened, frozen dead bodies fell out.

So he decided to walk. The weather was insufferably cold, but he was still wearing his warm military overcoat and boots, and the meaningless gold braid still dangled on his chest. Everywhere there were hideous tableaux of German brutality, people being whipped at their work, and stragglers being run down by trucks if they couldn't get out of the way quickly enough.

As he was walking along the road, he saw a crowd gathered around a barn, so he went over to see if there was anything there which needed his help. He found a poor Jewish family, father, mother, and children, being maltreated by some big strapping German officers.

'So you are hungry? Well, eat with your brothers, the swine,' the Germans shouted, pushing the poor gentle Jews into the troughs of the pigs.

Doctor Jaroshevich could not bear it in silence. 'These are human beings,' he said to the Germans. 'I'd like to ask you what *you* are.'

The Germans were too surprised to answer. They stood there with their thick necks blazing red with anger. But they couldn't think of a suitable answer. Not just at the moment, anyway.

He walked along the road again, brushing the tears of indignation from his face. He knew he had made the Germans furious, and probably had accomplished no good, but he had not been able to restrain his disgust.

Then he heard a truck rumbling along the road behind him. It nearly ran him down. Then it stopped, and a big German face peered over the wheel.

'Your papers. And be quick about it.'

He handed up his passport and his other credentials. They barely glanced at them. Instead they reached down a big brawny fist and seized him by the chest and lifted him bodily into the truck.

'So . . . you are interested in human beings, are you!'

They took him back to the nearest town. It was night by now, and bitterly cold. As they pulled up to the Gestapo headquarters he saw that the door that was opening to admit him was the door of the death house, where the intellectuals and political prisoners were thrust to die or to be executed.

It was a small dark room, nine by thirteen feet. There were twenty-three men in it already, and one of them had died that afternoon, and two more would die by morning.

He knew these death houses. There are three types of Gestapo prisons, and this was the one where prisoners are not fed. Where they are left to die. Usually it takes only a few days, for the process is hurried along by beatings.

There were professors and newspaper men and musicians and artists in this hole, and all of them had passed the last outpost of despair. Some had slumped down on

the floor because they were too weak to stand. When their companions had the strength, they lifted them up by the armpits and made them walk around, for the temperature was twenty-five degrees below zero, and the sleep of the dangerous cold was always waiting to lull them into death.

Every morning, the door was opened and the Chief of the Gestapo came in and beat them. Sometimes he gave his underlings the privilege of beating the prisoners, but usually he kept it for himself. He was a young stupid German with a face like a chart of cruelty. The ones on the floor he kicked to find out if they were dead.

'A man cannot live here more than two weeks at the most,' the prisoners said. 'But the merciful way is to die the first day.'

Doctor Jaroshevich talked to them. He recited page after page of the Bible to them; many had never before listened to such words. And even those who had thought they were religious people found themselves in the presence of a faith more living than any they had known before.

'Man of God, pray for us,' they said, and he prayed night and day, still without fear, because he knew that even if he died, he had his Father's promise of eternal life. But he felt he would not die, because he still had work to do.

After a week, some food came mysteriously into the death cell. It was thrown in on the floor, but the prisoners fell upon it and ate, weeping with gratitude. Night after night the food was brought through the darkness and left on the prison steps by half-starved people outside the prison who knew Doctor Jaroshevich was within. The Gestapo men ate whatever they wanted and then threw the rest in on the floor. It was less than enough for one man, but it fed all twenty-three.

When the dead were removed, their places were taken

by new prisoners. After two weeks had passed, there was not one prisoner left alive who had been in the cell when Doctor Jaroshevich came. Many were younger than he, and their strength of body should have been greater than his. But he was a man not living by strength of body, for his strength was in God.

He was crippled now, from the lashes and gashes across his back. His legs had been frozen and had swelled so that he had to rip off the military boots. He was bent over almost double, but still he hobbled about, unwilling to give in to the death caress of the cold. Still he crept around and prayed and recited chapters from the Bible.

'God has not lessened His strength. He is mighty to save. If only we have faith,' he said over and over.

'How long can a man live in this hell?' newcomers asked out of the first day's anguish.

'I have lived thirty days,' he said, and he did not tell them that most men died in two weeks. 'Thirty days?' they said. 'If we can live that long, perhaps something will happen to save us. Perhaps the war will end . . .'

Men who never had prayed before prayed with him, and he says there were hours when the vile dark hole seemed full of light and radiance and peace.

Forty days went by, and fifty, and still he was alive. The guards outside were almost afraid of him by now. But the young brute who was the Gestapo head was enraged because the prisoner had not died. It was a personal affront, he felt; a breach of discipline, a defiance and a challenge to German authority.

It was a contest now between the brute and the gentle man of God. Every morning he came into the cell the moment he arrived at the death house. He flung open the door, hoping to see Doctor Jaroshevich slumped down on the floor. But when he saw him still alive, still

praying and preaching, his hard eyes glinted angrily, and he gave him an extra beating.

Fifty-three days had passed now, and the Gestapo head was not going to stand any more Polish nonsense. He came in and gave one fierce final beating, and when he had finished it, he said: 'Tomorrow at five, my fine Doktor, you will be shot. I have had enough of you.'

The other prisoners were more stricken than if the death sentence had been passed in their name. They had needed a miracle terribly — even if they themselves were going to die of cold and hunger and beating, they wanted the memory of one miracle to carry with them into eternity.

'Be of good cheer, my friends,' Doctor Jaroshevich said. 'I have not yet been shot. We shall wait and see. Today we shall pray, and tomorrow is in God's hand.'

So that last day they prayed and even sang a hymn in their parched swollen throats. The last night passed, and it was nearly dawn. Dawn on the clock, but never through a window, for the only window was high up on the stone wall, and it had been covered with rags and boards.

Five o'clock came on the Doctor's American wrist-watch. There was no sound outside the door of the cell, no loud clumping German boots on the stones, no guttural German voice shouting orders. Five-thirty . . . and six . . . and ten o'clock . . . and still there was no sound outside. It was as though everyone in the world had forgotten them. The whole day passed, in breathless suspense. As well as he could remember it, he recited again the story of Peter in the Prison.

'Peter therefore was kept in prison, and when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains, and the keeper before the door kept the prison. And behold the angel of the Lord came upon him and

a light shined in the prison, and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly." And the chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, "Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals." And so he did. And he went out and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city which opened for them of his own accord.'

They talked about God all day, and many of them felt as if they had been born again. But still no one came near the cell. Now it was ten o'clock at night and suddenly there were the dread sounds on the stones, and the rasping key in the lock, and the German voices.

Then the door opened, and a strange group of soldiers peered in. Not the young German brute, the special enemy, but an old white-haired man was in charge. He looked in silently, and then he raised his hand and pointed.

'Who is that man?' he said in a whisper, pointing straight at Doctor Jaroshevich. The other prisoners pulled away from him, and he stood alone, saying nothing, but with his face lifted.

Then a strange thing happened. There was a sobbing and a commotion. But this time it was not from the prisoners. This time it was from one of the jailers himself. A man fell on his knees, weeping and begging for mercy. He flung his arms around the old German's knees.

'Please . . . that man, sir . . . he has been a blessing to all of us . . . please let me take him out of here . . . let me take care of him . . . ' It was the nameless Gestapo jailer, who had watched and listened day after day at the keyhole, who had watched with a magnifying

glass through the keyhole, hoping to find out the secret of holiness from a man's face.

The peace of God in that death cell had come out through that keyhole and had entered into that nameless German's heart.

It had done more than that. The prayers to God had gone out, stronger than any of man's decrees, and had re-allotted the authority in that jail. No one could explain how it had happened, but suddenly at four-thirty in the morning, a new man had been sent to take charge of that death house, and the young German brute had been ordered elsewhere. One half-hour before the execution hour . . .

However strange and unbelievable it may seem to you and me, to Doctor Jaroshevich it is not strange.

'God always has a right-thinking man to do His work,' he says. 'He can bring that man from any distance and put him in the place where the work needs to be done.'

Within a half-hour there were doctors in that cell, binding up the lashed backs, treating the frozen legs and arms. Food was sent in, tea for the other prisoners and good rich milk for Doctor Jaroshevich.

'But we poured the milk into the tea and it was all milk,' he says simply.

The next day, he was taken out of the cell and questioned. The new head of the Gestapo knew there would have to be some pretence of a trial, but he had already made up his mind that this man of God was free, and that nothing *could* keep him in prison. They stood him up in the court, with his arms fastened to a post because he was too weak to stand alone. They asked him questions and did not wait for answers, quickly scribbling into the report whatever they thought would account for their actions.

They put him in a cell by himself 'for observation' and from there as soon as he was able to travel, his

jailers themselves helped him to escape. They gave him clothes and letters to their relatives, and mapped out a safe itinerary for him. He made his way down to Italy, finally, without money or passport.

'But I knew that God had brought me this far, and He would never forget His promises. For He had been my refuge and my strength,' he says.

So he came, step by miraculous step, back to New York. He is well now, of course, and younger looking than his years. He tells his story unsparingly wherever he thinks it will help Americans realize that when the post-war work begins in Europe, God must have his part in the reshaping.

You cannot listen to him without being sure that that small light which shone through a prison keyhole never can be entirely extinguished.

Somewhere in that Gestapo darkness there must be one man who knows, because he saw it happen, that man shall know the truth, and the truth shall make him free. A moment must come for that man also to break his own prison bonds, just as Peter did, and Peter's modern descendant, and when that moment comes, he must remember.

Don't Read This —

IF YOU WANT to indulge yourself today — if you want to think about your fascinating little whims — maybe take the day off, and just enjoy yourself, or eat anything you want, or loaf, or feel sorry for yourself — I don't believe you'd better read this.

It is a letter an American boy wrote home to his family. His name is Lieutenant Henry G. Lee, and he graduated, class of '37, from Pomona College. The letter was published in the *Pomona* (Calif.) *Progress Bulletin*.

In the Field
Feb. 12, 1942

Dear Mother, Dad, and Frances:

This letter may never be delivered . . . Perhaps I'll be able to cable you before it arrives.

About the war I can say nothing. You back home know more about it than we do. All we see is our own little theater of operations. . . .

Also, I am proud to be a part of the fight that is being made here; and would not, even if it were possible, leave here until it is over and we have won, as we inevitably will. By 'we' I mean our country in general. . . .

I have seen some horrible things happen, and have

had my share of narrow escapes, but I have also seen some very wonderful acts of courage, self-sacrifice, and loyalty. At last I have found what I have searched for all my life — a cause and job in which I can lose myself completely and to which I can give every ounce of my strength and my mind. And I have mentally and spiritually conquered my fear of death. Pure animal terror — a protective emotion — cannot be entirely subdued by the mentality, but it can, and has been, controlled.

My prayer each night is that God will send you, who are suffering so much more than I am, His strength and peace. During the first few days of war I also prayed for personal protection from physical harm, but now that I may be given strength to bear whatever I must bear and whatever I must do so that those men under me will have every reasonable chance.

Life and my family have been very good to me . . . and have given me everything I have ever really wanted, and should anything happen to me here it will not be like closing a book in the middle as it would have been had I been killed in the first few days of the war.

For in the last two months I have done a lifetime of living, and have been a part of one of the most unselfish, cooperative efforts that has ever been made by any group of individuals.

Mistakes may have been made . . . but that has nothing to do with the manner in which my comrades have reacted to their trial by fire. If the same selfless spirit were devoted to world betterment in time of peace, what a good world we would have!

The purpose of this letter is to send you my love and my thanks for just being my family. It is written with no so-called premonitions. Really, all in all, my chances are pretty good. Much better than most of the line officers of my grade and age. For, as I told you many

times in my letters before the war, my particular job — and it hasn't been changed — is about as safe as any soldier could have in wartime.

Keep 'em flying — West!

Your loving son and brother,

HENRY

P.S. Dad was right. He always said that actually being in a war is not as bad as reading or hearing about one. 'A man can do what he must do' is another apt phrase of his which I've never forgotten.

That's all there is to the letter. It was delivered, all right.

But the cable wasn't sent.

You see, it was written from Bataan.¹

¹Since this chapter was written, the *Pomona Progress Bulletin* has informed me that 'Henry G. Lee, First Lieutenant in army infantry, is now a prisoner of the Japanese on the Philippines, according to an official announcement by the War Department in Washington, D.C.'

The Man of Tomorrow

WHAT are they thinking about, the men in foxholes, the men crucified with loneliness and fear and homesickness, these people with whom we are going to live again some day? What kind of men are they becoming, while we are apart? Let's read the signs coming over the horizon about the man of tomorrow.

Since I have been working on this book I have found an abundance of what the scientists call 'suggestive evidence' that something new and wonderful is beginning to glow across our time. With everything else that is happening in this world, there is a stir of light in men's minds.

When they face the staggering facts about the post-war world, many of them know that there must be a return to spiritual values before anything can be settled. I have read dozens of letters and scores of statements from officers and chaplains and from the boys themselves, and the evidence is unmistakable.

It is impossible to strip men of all the artificial accessories of their lives and to stand them in the presence of the ultimate peril, without having these men face and weigh the issues of life. No matter how trivially they have thought before, in these utter moments men discover the identical fact about themselves and what they want. In crucial moments — even in the banal suspense

in a hospital waiting-room — values rearrange themselves in true perspective. After men have lived in this atmosphere month after month, issues become sublimely simple. When millions of such men come back to our world, they are going to bring this basic knowledge with them.

Men in danger go back to God. If they stay in danger long enough, this going-back becomes their permanent address. Hundreds of persons, both civilians and fighting men, have found refuge from terror by fleeing into a 'secret place.' Brave men don't retreat outwardly; they retreat into themselves, into that inner sanctuary where the extremity of man finds the strength of God. Safety at home or joviality at college offered no necessity for such retreat. Once a man has found it, even for the most terrible moment of his life when death seemed to be the alternative, he is at home with himself forever. Thousands of men have found this 'secret place,' for it is the widest shelter ever built, extending without limit, as wide as the need of man.

Hundreds of us at home have been at first shocked and then inspired by letters from the men who have found that place inside themselves where God dwells. If they realized the contrast between their letters and their old matter-of-fact attitude toward life, they'd probably not dare to say things like this, written by Lieutenant (j.g.) Robert Lundberg of Belmont, Massachusetts: "To hear three deep voices reciting Scripture together in a nearly dark tent covered by a still tropical night is an experience that could not be easily equaled."

Skilled writers like Melville Jacoby, the late correspondent of *Time Magazine*, as well as inept, inarticulate boys unaccustomed to expressing themselves, say it in their separate ways. Jacoby said, 'More than one soldier, hearing bombs landing near-by not hurting him or having a bullet nick in his helmet, admitted he never

believed in God before.' And a youngster training paratroops wrote to his mother, 'It may seem silly, but I think one thing we need more than ammunition and manpower is the power of God through the strength of our prayers.'

We at home may have to revise our ideas about the kind of men who are coming back to us. We may have to grow a little ourselves before we are big enough to see what they see coming up over the horizon.

We may have to revise our ideas about religion, too — and about the kind of persons who are religious. We'll have to concede new militancy to faith. Faith won't be wearing a lace cap and sitting in a corner in this new world. Faith will be a fighting force, and the men of faith will be young veterans, hard and scarred, but used to trusting God as simply as they trust that the sun is coming up tomorrow.

I doubt if they'll argue much about it. If *you* don't know, they'll just let it go at that. Faith is something like love; the only people who know much about it are those who have fallen in it — head over heels.

These men will be sick and tired of namby-pamby goodness; they'll want theirs aggressive. They've had quite enough of the unfortified goodness and pacifism which makes itself a prey to villainy. They know about Munich and Pearl Harbor, and they see that they're not geographical names, but states of soft, lazy thinking. Its longitude is on no map, but may be found in any person any where, as evil, really, as the evil that uses it to exploit.

If we are accustomed to thinking of spiritual strength as manifesting itself as softness and helplessness, we'll have to realize a new concept. I am convinced after having talked to countless fighting men that the most formidable and powerful men are the ones who have clear spiritual vision.

There is a verse in Timothy which says it like this: 'For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' One of these days we shall accept that kind of man as a pattern to shape the race of tomorrow.

Men like General Montgomery, and General Patton, and General Dobbie, and General MacArthur are this type. At a conference with a large staff at his command headquarters Montgomery stated bluntly, 'I read my Bible every day and I recommend you, gentlemen, to do the same.'

It is not easy for those who have felt deep experiences under danger to impart their faith to those who know only safety. What these men bring back to civilian life after the ordeals of the war will depend largely on what we are able to receive. It would be a tragedy as great as the war itself if they brought back the bread, and we could accept only the stone.

We do not need to wait for him, this man of tomorrow. He is all around us, emerging from the bewildered, embittered man of today, if we have but eyes to see him, and heart to join him. He has begun to be born into our race, made out of the meanings behind Dunkirk, Bataan, Malta, and Salerno. He has caught glimpses of himself and of what he can be. And he has caught glimpses of God, and nothing less than the full stature will satisfy him.

Man has been homesick a long time. He has wandered a long way off, and wasted his substance in riotous and profitless living. But he is tired to death of husks and swine. Not just a few of us, but the whole homesick race is the Prodigal Son, and he has 'come to himself,' as the parable puts it.

He has turned now, ever so slightly, and is taking his first steps toward home. 'And the father, seeing him while he was yet a great way off, ran to meet him.'

EPILOGUE

Fairst Goes a Long Way

HE WAS MR. MACPHERSON'S HERO; no mistake about that. He was the last word on seamanship; he handled men better than anyone Fairst had ever met in all his years at sea; he had had one darned adventure after another, and he was, besides, 'a Latin Swede from Toledo,' which Fairst says is as sure-fire as being the seventh son of a seventh son. His name is Eric Barcova, and he is six feet two with a Spanish twinkle in Swedish eyes, if you can imagine such a contradiction.

No matter how big a thing has happened to anybody else, a bigger one just happened to Eric Barcova.

'And the annoying part of it is that it's true,' Fairst said when he told me about him. 'We'll save him to the last for you to see. After Eric Barcova other chaps' adventures might as well have happened in a rocking-chair.'

'But how do you know he's a praying man?' I said doubtfully.

'He's a praying man, all right, and a swearing one and a singing one. Eric Barcova's everything other people are, only more so. Besides, I've seen him make his lads go to church on Sunday when we were in port.'

'Did he go with them?'

'That I cannot say,' Mr. MacPherson said with dig-

nity, which meant that whether or not Eric Barcova had gone, Fairst himself had not.

Halfway through the winter, when Fairst came into New York for a few days, he showed me a letter he had had from his friend, picked up at Baytown. Sure enough it had a robust story in it, of being torpedoed and drifting around in a lifeboat, and finally making an island, then walking thirty miles barefooted and finding nothing on it, and going back to the lifeboat, and starting out again . . .

'We thought we were goners, because we were way out of the lanes,' Eric Barcova said, 'but by a curious coincidence . . .'

Fairst looked up over his gold-rimmed glasses triumphantly. 'You see that "by a curious coincidence . . ."? When a man tells things to other men that involve God, they use some of His other names.'

'His other names?'

'Precisely. They say "by a curious coincidence," — "It just happened," et cetera. I've noticed that the Lord does some of His best work under a *nom de plume*.'

We were almost at the end of the time for finding material for this book, and we hadn't seen Eric Barcova. It looked as if we were going to miss each other, and then, suddenly he turned up in New York, bigger than Fairst had said and handsome besides.

'We'll take him out and feed him curry,' Fairst said. 'He's crazy about curry, with almonds and coconut. We won't tell him we have malice aforethought. We'll just get the mon to talking, and we'll see.'

We got him to talking, all right, without the slightest trying. He liked to talk, and he put his elbows on the table with his fists under his chin, and in five minutes you were off the coast of Africa, and in another ten you could smell Trinidad, and feel the sun burning your eyelids. Fairst himself likes to talk, but he gave Eric

Barcova triumphal right of way down the center of the conversation, and the way before his chariot was strewn with admiration.

It was a large and lovely evening, and the tales that happened to him, and to all the people he told about, were taller and brawnier than even I had expected. There was a kitten in a boy's lifebelt, and eight thirsty men who gave it a teaspoon of their water every day. There was an Aussie flier who'd been discharged after he was wounded, who couldn't get back into anything else, so he signed up on a merchantman, and was seasick all the time. There was one woman in a lifeboat for thirty-five days with so many men that seven of them had to stand; and a negro boy who tried to kill himself 'because he just couldn't get comfortable'; and a man who'd been taking a shower when the torpedo struck, who had to wear a missionary's red silk dress in the lifeboat.

And there was a great deal of wonderful 'coincidence' and 'it just so happened.' Whenever one of God's other names popped up, Mr. MacPherson would glance at me as if we had a guilty secret. But we didn't mention prayer, any of us.

We couldn't seem to mention it at all, until we were walking down Eighth Avenue to Eric Barcova's subway station, for he was spending the night in Morningside Heights with his sister's family. Then I said as casually as I could:

'I was reading something interesting the other day. It seems that now they're putting a Testament into every lifeboat.'

'A fine idea,' Eric Barcova said. 'I heard a man say yesterday that nowadays prayers are a part of the regulation equipment of every craft on the sea.'

I felt Fairst relax, and I must say my own excitement began bubbling.

'I've heard some wonderful stories lately, Mr. Barcova,' I said. 'It seems that all kinds of people have been turning to God these days.'

Fairst said friskily: 'We don't need to break up. It's still early. Let's stop in some place and have some coffee . . .'

'I wondered if you might have had any experience yourself,' I said.

Eric Barcova stopped on the street, and he let out one roar of mirth.

'Me?' he said. 'Me praying?'

And then he took my arm in a gentle and pitying way, and he said: 'Why, lady, I'm an atheist. From way back.'

I felt betrayed, and somehow ridiculous as you do when you find yourself alone, holding the faith. So . . . Fairst himself, my friend, had ganged up with this stranger against me. The two of them . . .

'Didn't you ever pray at all?' Fairst said, and I thought he sounded gleeful.

'Nope,' Eric Barcova said jovially. 'I'm a man who never needed any help from anybody.'

'Not even in a lifeboat — when there wasn't anything else you could do?' Fairst prodded him.

'Listen, son. When I'm in charge of a lifeboat, I don't want anybody there who isn't going to do his own work. God is always expecting other people to do His work for Him.'

We walked along in silence, and my mind was a turmoil of unacceptable answers. I never felt more bleak and forsaken. I glanced up at Fairst, hardly able to bear the delighted gleam which I knew would be in his eye. There was a gleam — but not of triumph or delight. It was a gleam of anger.

'So you don't think God should expect other people to do His work for Him,' he said in a dangerous voice.

'When you're in charge of a lifeboat, I suppose you do all *your* own work — the rowing and the bailing and the standing watch — I suppose that's what *you* do.'

'Of course not,' Eric Barcova said gruffly. 'I give the orders. I'm the brains — I'm responsible.'

'Precisely,' Fairst said.

He said nothing more. He went stamping along, a wiry little exclamation point of indignation beside his tall friend.

'Precisely,' he said again, even more fiercely.

We were all thinking back over the unexpected turn, and seeing what it meant.

'Well, I'm a son of a gun,' Eric Barcova said, blushing because he really saw the point.

'You're the brains,' Fairst said, 'and who do you suppose gave you the intelligence to operate those brains?'

Eric Barcova looked like a schoolboy. 'Well, I *said* I was a son of a gun,' he said truculently.

We had reached his subway station now, and he mumbled this and that, and I murmured something also, and he went down the stairs. Fairst himself looked five years younger, and tickled to pieces with himself. It was no puny man he had outtalked, but the biggest one he knew.

He took my arm in a virile kind of way, and walked me along briskly. I thought he'd be chuckling, but he wasn't. His face in the half-hushed dimout of Eighth Avenue was serious.

'Did you hear what I said to him?' he said wonderingly. I nodded.

'And did you hear what I called the Deity? I called *Him* God, the way people do who know Him.' He took out his neat handkerchief and started to polish his glasses, and then remembered that he didn't have them on. 'Maybe I do know Him,' he said. 'It just kind of

came over me when that big dumb atheist was boasting about himself . . .'

He looked around him at the people on the street; he looked down at me, and up at that fragment of sky above the buildings.

'There must be Something,' he said, 'or there wouldn't be us.'

THE END

This book tells of fighting men . . . and women . . . and even some children . . . who have turned to God in the midst of danger, and of how they were answered. There was Rickenbacker and his raft; the yawl that was lost for twenty-one days; the ambulance plane out of gas on an uncharted reef in mid-Pacific; the little French girl who was carried piggy-back across the Pyrenees; the emergency appendectomy by a pharmacist's mate on a submarine. From every theater of war the stories have poured in. Taken separately, each episode is an exciting adventure story; taken together, they offer confidence, conviction, and trust, a promise that is welcome in time of war.

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